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## Abstract

This study aims to explore Greek and Greek–Norwegian children’s experiences of migration and bicultural childhood. The period of fieldwork took place in different cities in Norway during the autumn of 2014. The methods employed are questionnaires, worksheets, mind-mapping activities and semi-structured interviews. The participants in the study were children born in Norway with one Greek-born and one Norwegian-born parent, immigrant children from Greece who had been living in Norway between one and three years when the study was conducted, one Greek and one Greek-Norwegian youth, their parents and a Greek teacher.

Due to the growing multicultural society, I want to give attention to children’s experiences of growing up in-between cultures. The thesis is twofold, focusing on migration issues related to integration and adaption, such as climate changes, networking, cultural adaption, integration in school, and changing perceptions on children’s safety and independence. Further, the focus is on how the Greek culture is represented in the participants’ lives through the use of language, food habits, Greek celebrations and traditions, visits to Greece, contact with relatives, and contact with other people of Greek and Greek-Norwegian decent in Norway.

The study reveals that the experience of migration results in a change in children’s childhood, as they adapt to the new society. It also shows how bicultural childhood is experienced differently depending on the flexibility to adapt and how the different cultures are represented in children’s lives. These children do thus have different conditions for developing or sustaining their identity and belonging to Greece and Norway.



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## List of acronyms

EEA – European Economic Area

EFTA – European Free Trade Association

EU – European Union

IMDi – Ministry of Integration and Diversity (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet)

IMF – International Monetary Fund

NAV – Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Arbeids- og velferdsforvaltningen)

SSB – Statistisk Sentralbyrå (An institution responsible for collecting, processing and providing official statistics about the Norwegian society)

UNCRC – United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child



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# 1 Introduction and background

Norway has only the last ten - fifteen years started to be described as a multicultural society (Fandrem, 2011). Marriage, work, education, natural disasters and war are among the reasons why many people migrate today. However, the most common reason for migrating to Norway is labor, due to the free flow of labor in great parts of Europe (Fandrem, 2011). Although Norway is not part of the European Union (EU), it is united with the EU states, through the European Economic Area (EEA) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Through the EEA and the EFTA Norway is enabled free movement of goods, capital, service and persons within the member states of EU and EFTA (EFTA, 2014). As a consequence of free flow of labor (Fandrem, 2011), and a relatively strong national economy, many people migrate to Norway for work, and their family migrate to reunite with their family members. Due to the economic situation in Europe<sup>1</sup>, the immigration from southern Europe to Norway have increased the recent years (See e.g. Eurostat, 2014a; Karanikolos et al., 2013; SSB, 2014b). Many of these immigrants come from Greece, and the topic of this thesis is migration and biculturalism among children of Greek and Greek-Norwegian decent living in Norway.

This research consists of two groups of participants, whereas one group consist of Greek families that have migrated to Norway within the last three years. The children in these families are thus born in Greece. The other group consists of Greek-Norwegian families with one Norwegian born and one Greek born parent. The children in this group are born in Norway. In the following, the immigrant children and their families will be defined as ‘Greek’, while the children born in Norway and their families will be defined as ‘Greek-Norwegian’. When talking about bicultural children and childhood, I am referring to both groups.

In Norway, as in most other countries, many children grow up in-between cultures. A bicultural childhood environment can lead to both challenges and advantages for children. Their sense of identity and belonging will be affected by the cultures the children are surrounded by and their attachment or ties to these cultures (See e.g. Hylland Eriksen, 2001; Sand, 2008). Children that have migrated from one country to another have to deal with sentiments of loss and the challenges of leaving relatives and friends, and a familiar environment where their mother tongue is spoken. In addition, they face challenges as they have to integrate into and adapt to a new environment,

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<sup>1</sup> See “Economic and political situation in Greece”.

learn a new language and find new friends (See e.g. Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008; Sluzki, 1992). In this thesis, I want to explore children's experiences of migration and bicultural childhood.

### 1.1 Choice of topic

I decided to do my research with children of Greek and Greek-Norwegian descent in Norway because of my personal interest in and affiliation to the Greek culture, the Greek language and the country, and my academic interest in children in a multicultural perspective. In the future, I might also be interested in working with children and integration. The reasons for my ties to Greece, is that I, since an early age have been traveling to Greece every summer for one month together with my family. This has resulted in a strong affiliation with the country, and the last five years I have also been studying the Greek language. My interest for multicultural education aroused during the years of my bachelor degree in Pedagogics where I had some courses about bilingualism and bicultural childhood. One of the topics I found very interesting, which also will be included in this thesis, is children's language learning in a bi- or multilingual context. When preparing my master thesis, I saw it as a good opportunity to combine these two interests by doing my fieldwork with bicultural children of Greek and Greek-Norwegian decent living in Norway.

I like the idea of using children's cultural background as a resource for learning by letting children share their cultural knowledge and experiences with each other in schools and kindergartens (See e.g. Fandrem, 2011). By letting children share their knowledge about their own culture, I believe their interest and their curiosity about their own and others' background will increase, as well as their own cultural identity can be strengthened. For some parents it is very important to maintain their culture and traditions when raising their children, while for others this is not that important. How this is for the Greek and Greek-Norwegian families that participated in this study will be further discussed in the analysis of this thesis.

### 1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to learn more about the consequences of childhood migration and about bicultural children's experience of growing up in-between cultures. It explores which challenges bicultural children meet when they migrate to another country or grow up with parents from two cultures, and which advantages they have from these experiences. I especially want to learn about how children experience integration and adaption, how the Greek and the Norwegian cultures are

represented in their lives, how their mother tongue is practiced and sustained, and how the representation of the two cultures affect children's development of identity and belonging.

### 1.3 Research questions

To learn more about childhood migration and about bicultural children's experience of growing up in-between cultures, I have developed the following research questions:

- How do children experience migration, adoption and integration?
- How are the Greek and the Norwegian cultures reflected in children's lives?

Based on the answers to these questions, and the discussion about the representation of Greek and Norwegian culture in children's lives, I will discuss the following question:

- How is the development of identity and belonging affected by children's lives in-between cultures?

### 1.4 Significance of the study

The growing multicultural society increases the need for knowledge about bicultural or multicultural childhoods. When working with children in a multicultural environment, it is important that the pedagogue, child welfare worker, or other people working with children have some knowledge about children's needs, or how children might experience migration and to grow up in-between cultures. By focusing on children's cultural luggage as a resource rather than a challenge, the children's cultural skills, such as language, can be used for strengthening children's identity and belonging (Fandrem, 2011). The Norwegian Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion (2012-2013) argues that the diverse knowledge of language and culture that children with immigrant background possess is also a resource for the society. Further, the knowledge about childhood migration and biculturalism can be used to make parents more conscious about challenges their children might meet.

There is already a lot of literature about children of immigrant parents growing up as part of a minority group, and about children that have experienced immigration. When reviewing the literature to this thesis I discovered that the literature on children with parents from two different countries where one is from the host country is rather limited in comparison with the amount of literature on children with two immigrant parents. There has also been a lot of focus on the economic situation in Greece and the increasing emigration from the country, but little is known

about how Greek children experience the process of migration and integrating to a new socio-cultural context. This thesis thus contributes to the literature on children that are growing up with parents from two different countries, as well as to the literature on children's experience of migration.

## 1.5 Background

### 1.5.1 Immigrant population in Norway

The group of people of Greek descent in Norway can be contextualized among the immigrant population in Norway with statistics from Statistisk Sentralbyrå<sup>2</sup> (SSB, 2013). SSB have presented an overview over the numbers of inhabitants in Norway in immigrant categories and country background. They have divided the immigrants into six categories, which consists of 'Immigrants', 'Norwegian born with immigrant parents', 'Born abroad with one Norwegian born parent', 'Norwegian born with one parent born abroad', 'Born abroad with two Norwegian born parents', and 'Born in Norway with two Norwegian born parents'<sup>3</sup>. In 2013, these immigrant categories consisted of 1.172.189 persons of the total population of 5.051.275, which is approximately 23 percentage of the population. Of these, 2 764 were of Greek descent. The children that have participated in this study consist of children from two of these categories: 'Immigrants' and 'Norwegian born with one parent born abroad'. Within these two categories, there were, in 2013, respectively 1312 and 880 persons of Greek decent in Norway, including both children and adults.

#### *Why do migrants choose to go to Norway?*

Internationally migration is explained with the three D's; development, demography and democracy (Utenriksdepartementet, 2007). People are moving due to the welfare gap, population imbalances, repression and human right violations. Norway is an attractive destination for migrants as the country offers safety, stability, welfare benefits and as it has demand in the labor market (Utenriksdepartementet, 2007). According to the The Norwegian Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion (2012-2013), the standard of living in Norway is better than most other countries and the socio-economic inequalities are smaller. They explain that most immigrants are employed and are included in different social arenas. Differences in salaries is also a motivating

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<sup>2</sup> Statistisk Sentralbyrå is an institution responsible for collecting, processing and providing official statistics about the Norwegian society (SSB, 2014a).

<sup>3</sup> When SSB refers to 'Born in Norway with two Norwegian born parents' as an immigrant category, they refer to people with for example grandparents that have immigrated to Norway.



factor for migrants (Cappelen, Skjerpen, & Tønnessen, 2014). Since Norway is part of the EEA and EFTA, as mentioned in the introduction, citizens within EU, including Greece, are enabled to freely migrate to Norway for employment (EFTA, 2014).

### *A Nordic welfare state*

The Nordic countries are popular destinations for migrants due to the welfare model. The Nordic welfare model is, according to Norden.org<sup>4</sup>, based on the values of equal opportunities, social security and safety for all. Everyone has the same right to social and health services, education and culture (Norden, 2014). Vulnerable groups are cared for, and everyone should be enabled to take part in social life and decision-making processes. The taxes are quite high in the Nordic welfare states, as this is where the main funding of the system comes from. Women can easily combine family life and work, due to the child-minding services and the care of elderly, which is also affordable for people in low-paid work. There are some differences in the welfare system in the Nordic countries. In Norway, for instance, the system is dominated by public sector provision of welfare services, more than in the other countries (Norden, 2014).

The Nordic welfare states have special competencies in the areas like care for the elderly, gender equality, health centers and hospitals. The countries do however also face challenges in similar areas as the EU. The care for elderly needs to be improved, they need more people in the labor market and they need to improve the sustainability of it, they have to maintain the quality of the welfare services, and the integration of vulnerable groups, especially immigrants, needs to be promoted (Norden, 2014).

In Norway the welfare system is managed by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV<sup>5</sup>). NAV was established in 2006 and is administering a third of the national budget. This is done through schemes like ‘unemployment benefit, work assessment allowance, sickness benefit, pensions, child benefit and cash-for-care benefit’ (NAV, 2013).

### *Integration politics in Norway*

According to The Norwegian Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion (2012-2013), schools and kindergartens, as well as the society have to adapt to the diverse population. To

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<sup>4</sup> “Norden.org is the webpage for the official Nordic cooperation” (Norden, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> In Norwegian: Arbeids- og velferdsforvaltningen, originally: Ny arbeids- og velferdsforvaltning, hence the abbreviation NAV.

facilitate for good integration for children, one must reduce their challenges and barriers so that they have equal opportunities on line with other children in Norway (ibid). The inhabitants in Norway are all entitled the same rights, and have to follow the same laws, but there is still room for cultural diversity (ibid). According to the Municipal- and Administration Committee (Kommunal- og forvaltningskomiteen, 2013), it is a goal that everyone, regardless of their cultural or ethnic background, their gender or sexual orientation, shall be offered equal access to public services. Further, they explain that the individual public sectors are responsible for adapting their services to the diversity of the population. It is the responsibility of the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion to coordinating the integration politics, but on a daily basis, the municipalities are the most important actors in the integration work (Kommunal- og forvaltningskomiteen, 2013). Another actor that is involved in the integration politics is the Ministry of Integration and Diversity<sup>6</sup>. They are responsible for contributing to the implementation and development of the integration politics of the Government. All the members of the Municipal- and Administration Committee see immigration and diversity as a resource for the society, except from the members from the right wing party, Fremskrittspartiet (Kommunal- og forvaltningskomiteen, 2013). This party does however argue that immigrants contribute with a lot to the Norwegian society, but that the immigrants should have more of the responsibility for their own integration (ibid). The Municipal- and Administration Committee argues that the Norwegian society shall give room for diversity so that all inhabitants in Norway can feel belonging to the Norwegian community, and their experience and knowledge from their culture, is and should be valued as a resource. This way, they can develop a feeling of safety and trust to the society (ibid).

### *School and education*

In Norway, children and youths have access to free school and education. The Norwegian schools facilitate for minority children, especially with focus on language. Pupils in primary- or lower secondary school in Norway with another mother tongue than Norwegian or Sami have, according to the Education Act,

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<sup>6</sup> In Norwegian: Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet (IMDi).

*The right to adapted education in Norwegian until they are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the normal instruction of the school. If necessary, such pupils are also entitled to mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or both.*

(Utdanningsdirektoratet, 1998, Section 2-8, p. 11).

In these classes, children can get to experience a common cultural ground with their teacher (Sand, 2008) and their fellow class mates, maybe also learning about their country of origin. In some municipalities in Norway, newly-arrived immigrant children receive this adapted education in Norwegian in receiving schools or receiving classes. All primary- and lower secondary school children in Norway do however have the right to go to their local school if they prefer this (New in Norway, 2015).

For the purpose of integration and improvement of Norwegian language knowledge among minority children before they start school, the Norwegian Government has since 2006 tried out a trial arrangement of free enrolment in kindergarten 20 hours per week in areas with high percentage of immigrants in Oslo, Bergen and Drammen. In the end of 2014, Solveig Horne, the Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, argued that this arrangement was successful and should be further developed to include bigger areas, directed towards families with low income. One requirement for receiving this offer is however that the parents must be active in for example Norwegian lessons, education or in the work force (The Norwegian Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion, 2014). In April 2015, the requirement for the parents to participate in education or work was brought up in media. This caused debate and critical voices argued that the requirement would exclude children and families in greatest need for this offer (Hellesnes, Reinholdtsen, & Solheim, 2015). According to the right-wing party Høyre, the requirements can lead to better involvement of immigrant women in the society. The left-wing party Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV), on the other side, argues that some parents' bad decisions can thus lead to that some children are excluded from the arrangement of free enrolment in kindergarten (Hellesnes et al., 2015). To include all children of low income families and to facilitate for better integration and Norwegian learning for immigrant children, can thus be a challenge with the requirements that are given today, even though the intention to better integrate immigrant women is good. As this offer has received a lot of criticism and is currently up for debate, the requirements might however

change in the nearest future and hopefully all children from low-income families will be included independent of their parents' decisions.

#### 1.5.2 Economic and political situation in Greece

The participants in the research mentioned different motivations for migrating to Norway, such as love and marriage, education or unemployment in Greece, which is further described later in the thesis. As several of the participants in the study mentioned that their decision to migrate was partly motivated by unemployment or by the difficult economic situation in Greece, it is necessary to give a short presentation of the political and economic situation in the country.

The current economic and political situation in Greece is affected by the financial crisis in Europe that started in 2009. The crisis was caused by events in the US, prior to 2008, where there was an overabundance of investments in poorly administered mortgages. The turmoil spread to the European banks, and Ireland, Spain and Italy was among the countries that were worst affected (Karanikolos et al., 2013). As a consequence, Greece has had six years of negative economic growth, and the economy has decreased by 25 percent since 2008. In 2014, it looked like the economic situation finally was improving for Greece, as Greek authorities were expecting a growth of 0,6 percent for 2014 (Utenriksdepartementet, 2014c). In the end of the year, the economic growth turned out to be 0,8 percent (Utenriksdepartementet, 2015b), 0,2 percent more than expected, which shows that the country's economic situation might be on its way up.

The political situation in the country is dominated by the economic situation. Due to loans from the EU, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government is obliged to have restrictive and structural economic politics. The difficult economic situation and the restrictive politics have led to provocation among several vocational groups. It has therefore been frequent strikes in Greece the last years (Utenriksdepartementet, 2014b). As a consequence of the restrictive politics 27 percent of the population was unemployed in 2014, and among youths the unemployment was as high as 60 percent (Utenriksdepartementet, 2014a). At the beginning of 2015, the unemployment in Greece was 26 percent for the population and above 50 percent for young people under the age of 25 (Utenriksdepartementet, 2015b). The unemployment for the population has decreased by 1 percent, and a higher percent of young people are employed in 2015 than in the previous year.

The new government elected January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015, wants to take Greece out of the reform program with the loan agreements from the EU, the European Central Bank and the IMF. It is uncertainty around the relation with these lenders and how to secure stability in the country's income in relation to loan agreements in the future (Utenriksdepartementet, 2015a). It will be interesting to see how the economic and political situation in Greece develops with the new government, and if the positive economic growth from the previous year will continue.

### 1.5.3 Declining population in Greece

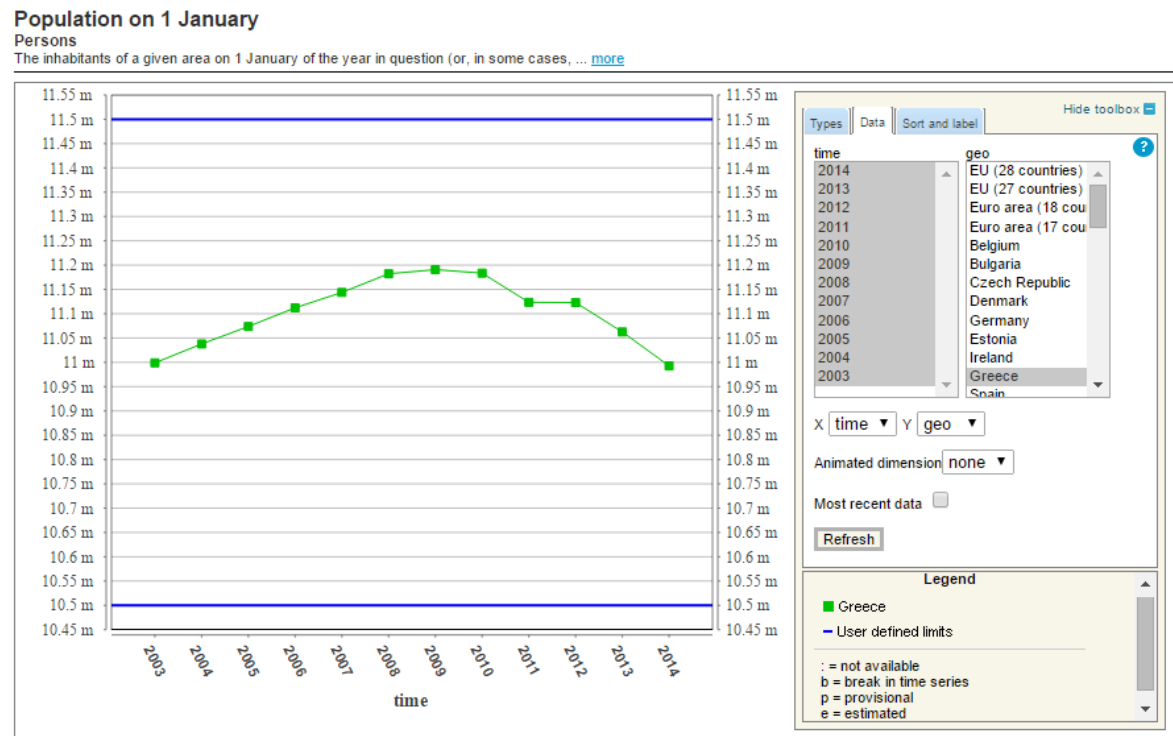


Figure 1: Population growth in Greece 2003 – 2014 (Eurostat, 2014b)

Greece had a continuous population growth until 2009, but then the population started to decline (See the figure 1). From first of January 2009 to first of January 2014 the population in Greece declined with almost 200,000 inhabitants (Eurostat, 2014b). With statistics from Eurostat, Enet - Greek Independent Press (2013) explains that 44,200 more people emigrated from Greece than immigrated in 2012. Since Eurostat started to collect the data in 1998, this is the highest level of net emigration recorded in Greece (See also Eurostat, 2014a). In an article from World Population Review (2014), the decreasing population in Greece is explained by the financial crisis in Europe. As explained by the numbers above, the population in Greece started to decline approximately at the same time as the financial crisis arrived.

While the population in Greece is declining, the Greek immigrant population in Norway is increasing. The table below, from Statistisk Sentralbyrå (SSB, 2014b), shows the increasing number of people migrating from Greece to Norway every year from 2006 to 2013.



Innvandring, utvandring og nettoinnvandring, etter statsborgerskap, tid og statistikkvariabel

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	Innvandring	Innvandring	Innvandring	Innvandring	Innvandring	Innvandring	Innvandring	Innvandring
Hellas	58	62	118	55	110	258	396	562

**Fotnote(r):**

Alle ett- og to tall på innvandringer og utvandringer er endret til 0 eller 3 for å ivareta personvernet.

Figure 2: Number of persons migrating from Greece to Norway each year from 2006 to 2013

The numbers of people migrating from Greece to Norway was gradually increasing from 2006 to 2008 with approximately 103 percent (See table 1). Then in 2009, the number of migrants dropped with approximately 53 percent. After 2009, the number of migrants started to go up again, and in 2013, the number had increased with approximately 922 percent since 2009. With such an increase in the numbers of Greek immigrants coming to Norway, there must as well be an increasing number of children of Greek or Greek-Norwegian decent growing up in Norway.

*Table 1: Yearly increase in migration from Greece to Norway in percentage*

Year:	Change:	Year:	Change:
2006-2007	+ 6,7 %	2010-2011	+ 134,5 %
2007-2008	+ 90,3 %	2011-2012	+ 53,4 %
2008-2009	- 53,4 %	2012-2013	+ 41,9 %
2009-2010	+ 100 %		

### 1.6 Structure of the thesis

Here, in the introduction chapter, the aims and the significance of the study has been shortly presented, as well as some background information about Greece and Norway to contextualize the research. In the next chapter, I will present the theoretical framework of the thesis. First, I will give an introduction to the social studies of childhood, including the child as a social actor, and childhood as socially constructed and varying between cultures. Then, I will discuss childhood

migration, and children born in the residential country with one or both parents from abroad, belonging and identity, and bilingualism. In the Methodology, I will give an overview over the research methods, ethical considerations during the research and the field experience. The two following chapters includes the analysis of the thesis. Here I will present and discuss the data from the fieldwork. In the first analysis chapter, the main topics that will be discussed are reasons for migration, and participants' experience of adaption and integration in Norway with focus on climate, cultural adaption, friends and network, integration in school and the notion of safety in Norway followed by increased independence among children. By discussing these topics, I also want to show how childhood is changing through migration. In the next analysis chapter, I will first present children's associations with Greece to get an idea of what the country means for the children, before I discuss how the Greek culture is represented in their lives. The representation of the Greek culture will be discussed in relation to language, food, celebrations and traditions from Greece, visits to Greece and contact with relatives, and in relation to contact with other Greek people in Norway. The chapter ends with a discussion about how the representation of Greek culture in children's lives is contributing to their development of Greek or Greek-Norwegian identity. In the conclusion, I will give a summary of the thesis with some reflections and ideas for further research.





## 2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I will give the theoretical framework of the topics that will be discussed further in this thesis. To start with, I will give an introduction to the social studies of childhood with focus on its emergence and how the perspective of children have changed during the last century, children as social actors, childhood as socially constructed and on the existence of diversities of childhoods. As the topic of this thesis is biculturalism among children, I will write about childhood migration, changing childhoods, social ties, adaption and integration, children born in the residential country with one or both parents from abroad, bilingualism and about belonging and identity.

### 2.1 The social studies of childhood

#### 2.1.1 The emergence of the social studies of childhood

The social studies of childhood did, according to some researchers, emerge in the late 1980s (E.g. Smith & Greene, 2014). Others do however argue that it started earlier. As early as in 1973, Charlotte Hardman suggested that children should ‘be studied in their own right, and not just as receptacles of adult teaching’ (Hardman, 1973 p. 87, Prout & James, 1990b). At this time, children’s voices were usually not taken into account in research, as the understanding of childhood and child development in the beginning of the 1900s often was explained by psychological experiments (Prout & James, 1990b). In the social sciences, children were studied as a part of the family or household, but researchers were rarely interested in studying children in their own right (Smith & Greene, 2014). During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, children were considered as passive recipients of adults’ actions. Due to children’s lower chronological age, their opinions, perspectives and desires were underestimated and children were considered as not worth listening to (Lee, 2001). Within developmental psychology, it has been said that children are not yet human beings before they have become socialized and domesticized (Rafky, 1973 in Qvortrup, 1987). Qvortrup (1987, p. 5) argues that this view ‘excludes children from society’ and reduces them to ‘human becomings’. He points out that childhood is an integral part of society, and children can thus be considered as ‘beings’ rather than ‘becomings’.

After the 1970s and 1980s, the understanding of children and childhood changed a lot within certain academic circles. Children were more actively included in research, and their views were increasingly seen as valuable and important. While some argue that this changing perspective of children represents a paradigm shift (E.g. Prout & James, 1990b), others argue that the claims that are made about the study of children today is related to what some writers have been saying for

centuries. For instance, Ryan (2008) points out that some earlier writers were looking at children's views of society, such as John Lock, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sigmund Freud and John Dewey.

#### 2.1.2 Children as social actors and childhood as socially constructed

A person who has played an important role in the emergence of the social studies of childhood, is the Soviet psychiatrist Vygotsky (James, 2009). Vygotsky (1978) argues that speech and action are important for children's development, and that learning and development happen through social interaction with others. After the emergence of the social studies of childhood, children's voices were given higher value and listened to by adults. Children's agency is recognized within the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In the UNCRC, "the child who is capable of forming his or her own views [has] the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child" (United Nations, 1989, Article 12). There are however still some scholars today who study children to understand development rather than to learn about children's everyday lives (Smith & Greene, 2014).

Traditionally, childhood has been seen as a universal and homogenous category. This view is affected by development psychology (James & James, 2012c), and by biological facts about the early stages of life, where cultural components were taken little account of (Prout & James, 1990b). It was then questioned to which extent childhood is a natural or social phenomenon (James & James, 2012c). According to the British sociologist Giddens (1979), human beings are social agents. Through the actions of these agents, social life is constructed. If children are understood as human beings (Qvortrup, 1987), and thus social agents, they are actively taking part in the shaping of their own social lives and the lives of people around them (Prout & James, 1990b). The 'reality' is thus socially constructed, for children as well as for adults. As this 'reality' is different in different parts of the world, the construction of childhood is changing from one culture to another (James & James, 2012c, pp. 116-117). The understanding of children and childhood has also been changing through history, and is thus constructed and reconstructed through time and space (Hendrick, 1990; Prout & James, 1990b).

#### 2.1.3 A diversity of childhoods

The social construction of childhood must be seen in relation to class, gender and ethnicity (Prout & James, 1990b). Childhood is defined either by socially, culturally, historically or legally matters. It is thus possible to talk about a diversity of childhoods (James & James, 2012c). From research conducted in developing countries, we know that children's lives can be very different from one

society to another, and it is thus possible to say that childhood has varying meanings within different societies and cultures (Qvortrup, 1987). During the International Year of the Child in 1979, the Western world was confronted with images of childhoods contrasting with what they had seen before. They saw children suffering from poverty, famine and war, and people's image of a 'happy, safe, protected [and] innocent childhood' was thus challenged (Holt, 1975, pp. 22-23, in Prout & James, 1990a).

Despite the many different childhoods, there are some similarities with childhood that can be recognized globally, such as children's physical immaturity, and their dependency on adults to cover their basic survival needs (Woodhead, 1997 in James & James, 2012c). Due to the different understandings of childhood, it is problematic to determine when childhood ends and adulthood begins (James & James, 2012c), but by international legal definitions, children are defined as those under the age of 18 (United Nations, 1989), and this is the definition I am using when I am talking about children in this thesis.

## 2.2 Childhood migration

Migration has become more common due to globalization (Athar, 2008), and bi- and multicultural childhoods are thus becoming more usual. The reasons and motivations for leaving the home country to settle down somewhere else can be many, but Christopoulou and de Leeuw (2008) found in their research with refugee children that the decision to migrate always involve plans for the future. The future perspectives were also visible among the migrant families that participated in my research who migrated due to unemployment or the economic or politic situation in Greece in search for a safe or stable country to live in.

### 2.2.1 Changes of childhood and family life

Through migration, the experience of childhood changes and a transformation happens within the family (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). This is a consequence of the meeting with the new cultural reality where children and adult roles often are inverted. Children do often become active cultural agents who have to negotiate and translate values and meanings (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008; Sand, 2008). When it comes to learning the language of the host country and taking part in everyday life, children are often in a better position than their parents, as they go to school and interact with peers (Leira & Saraceno, 2008). Children are also participating in social areas like the neighborhood, the street and the playground. Christopoulou and de Leeuw (2008) argue

that children's active involvement and ability to adapt in the new society can lead to a change of roles where children become a representative for their family, and introduces their parents to the new society, and its rules and norms. While exploring the new culture, children are often more flexible than adults, and thus more willing to push the boundaries. In the meanwhile, parents might be the ones working to remain the 'old culture, preserving memory and passing on knowledge, habits and values' (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008, p. 246). Children can thus be led into a double role where they are both mediating between the society and their parents and at the same time trying to sustain their cultural values. While facing the challenges and tension of the changing roles and adapting to the society, the family has to negotiate its place within the new context. Sometimes parents might also try to reinvent the knowledge, habits and values from their own culture while they try to make them relevant to the new context (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). This leads to a change in the culture the family has brought with them to Norway. Sand (2008) thus argues that the cultural and ethnic identity changes after migration.

The experience of migration is different from person to person, leading to disempowerment for some, while to empowerment for others. An example can be mentioned from a migrant family in Greece (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008): While the father experienced loss of language, a feeling of homelessness and longing, and felt culturally disorientated, the 12 year old daughter did sometimes experience the same situation as empowering, as the new language was a tool for her to express herself and mediate between cultures, languages and generations.

As children meet many challenges when migrating and the focus often is given to the negative experiences, it is important to pay attention to the empowering experiences that children have (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008), as illustrated in the example. When giving attention to children's increased involvement and growing responsibility, they can be enabled to cope better when meeting the new society (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008).

### 2.2.2 Familial and social ties

When migrating, the child leaves its country of origin, as well as familial and social ties. Some of the previous social networks are kept while others are lost. Depending on the person's effort and capability to adapt to the new society, the person can develop a new network that can replace parts of the network that was lost during migration (Sluzki, 1992). Some people leave part of their nuclear family behind while migrating, while others move all together, but the extended family is

usually disrupted (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). As parts of the familial and social networks are left behind, the children's notion of belonging is changed. Some families are split up, as the different members migrate to different countries. For the next generation of children, the relatives are spread around the world, and the transnational familial ties might thus be maintained by contact through internet, telephone and travels (Åkesson, 2007).

The family that migrates is in risk of being isolated when arriving to the new country and has to start building a new network. Building a new network can however take time (Sand, 2008). When migrating together, the family is sharing many of the experiences and the challenges they meet. The family leaves the safe environment of their homeland, which might as well have been broken before the family decided to migrate (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). While coping with these challenges together, the family members can be brought closer to each other (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). The ideas of home and belonging are modified and adjusted to the new relations created (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2004 in Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008), and to their ability to integrate and adapt in the new society.

When moving to a new country, Sand (2008) argues that the person might experience difficulties in communicating and get confused by the norms and values of the host country. Some people also experience discrimination due to their ethnic background. When meeting many challenges like this, the person can be in risk of developing a negative self-perception. Other experiences, such as making a network of friends will, however, contribute to a positive self-perception (Sand, 2008). Relationships with peers are important for children and adolescents when forming their identity. The creation of relations outside the family is crucial to create a network in the new society (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). Fandrem (2011) argues that the school and the kindergarten are good places for both minority children and ethnic Norwegian children to build relations and friendships.

### 2.2.3 Adaption and integration

When migrating from one country to another, there are many changes in the family's life. Sand (2008) explains some of the changes that happen when the family move from a familiar to an unfamiliar environment. In their home country, they had roles they were familiar with. In the new country, these roles and their social status might change. Another challenge is lack of language knowledge in Norwegian, and in some cases, people are not familiar with the Latin alphabet.

Furthermore, they have to get used to a new currency and price level. The climate might be different, and it can be difficult to cook, as there are other food products than in the home country. Adams (2009) tells that some young people experience loneliness after leaving friends and relatives behind, and they have to adapt to social norms on how to dress and how to speak with others. Due to all the differences, young people can have problems with feeling at home in the new place, and some might change their way of being. Integration is a two-way process between the immigrants and the society. The Norwegian society gives room for immigrants to sustain their cultural characters, but does also expect immigrants to adapt to Norwegian norms and values (Sand, 2008). Sand (2008) argues that if a person gives up too much of their own cultural values when adapting to the society, they are in risk of losing their cultural belonging and pride. She suggests that immigrants should be integrated with an aim to sustain their culture, as well as try to develop a fundament to cope with the challenges of the new society.

2.3 Children born in the residential country with one or both parents from abroad  
Three of the families participating in my research had one parent that was born in Norway and one that had emigrated from Greece before the children were born. As these children have not experienced migration and are familiar with the Norwegian culture, language and society from they were born, their lives do of course differ from the other children in the study. There are however also many similarities between these children, for example in relation to cultural traditions, language, food habits and relatives in Greece, as described in the analysis.

Despite the many children that grow up with parents from two different countries, most of the literature on bicultural children seems to concern children that have migrated or children born in the residential country with two parents from abroad. This paragraph will thus include theory about children born in the residential country with one or both parents from abroad, even if the participants in the study that was born in Norway had one Norwegian-born parent.

A challenge, which is described in several studies with children of parents from two countries, is the use of language between children and parents. In a study conducted by Anderson (1999) among bicultural British-Greek families in Greece, many families had problems with negotiating which language to use at home. The disagreement could be between the parents, between children and parents, between the children and one of the parents and in some cases grandparents were involved in the negotiation of which language to use. Anderson (1999) found that the use of a foreign

language or a speech accent can lead to stigmatization by peers. The daughter in one of the families in his study explained that she told her mother to not pick her up at school because when her friends heard the mother's accent when speaking Greek, they started to call the girl 'foreigner'. In my research with Greek-Norwegian children, I did not ask whether there were any disagreement about the choice of language within the families. Only a few of these children were however fluent in Greek. Whether this has been a conscious decision within the family, is unknown. The use of language among both the Greek and the Greek-Norwegian children will be discussed further in the analysis.

Åkesson (2007) found in her study with young adults in Sweden with immigrant parents from Cape Verde that the participants' ties to their parents' home country are often based on the contact they have with their relatives through internet and telephone, and in some cases, this is the only contact these people have with their parents' home country. All her participants expressed that the relations they have to their relatives in Cape Verde are important to them. For many of the young people of Cape Verdean decent, travels to the parents' home country are important. Most of the people are positive about the visits, and those that have been there only a few times gives a more romantic picture of it. In Åkesson's view, an important part of what keeps the community of Cape Verdeans in Sweden together, are the memories from the travels and the dreams and discussions about going 'home'.

If the parents in the bicultural family want their children to develop an affiliation to both cultures, it is necessary that the parents do a conscious effort to introduce their children to the cultures and the countries (Hoffmann, 1991). In a research with Greek-Norwegian children in Greece, Vinje (2010) found that the families have close relations to Norway. They sometimes eat Norwegian food, and they celebrate Christmas in both the Greek and the Norwegian way. The relations to Norway are also kept through longer visits to Norway, as well as visits to Greece from their Norwegian relatives. These visits were important for the children's development of the Norwegian language, as several of the children were only speaking Norwegian with their mother. For the Norwegian mothers, it was important that the children were able to communicate with their relatives in Norway, as well as these relations were motivating the children to learn Norwegian.

## 2.4 Bilingualism

During the last century, there have been disagreements about whether bilingualism is positive or negative for the development of a child's intelligence. Valvatne and Sandvik (2007) show that relatively similar studies on bilingual children's intelligence in the 1950's and the 1960's gave contradicting results. Some have argued that bilingualism affects the development of the majority language in a negative way, while others have argued that bilingualism leads to mental flexibility and increased ability to form concepts. An explanation of the contradicting results is that some earlier researchers did not consider the differences between the children's groups, such as different socio-economic background or different levels of knowledge in the language of the test, which thus can have affected the results (Loona, 2001; Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007). After the end of the 1960's the perspective on bilingualism changed radically (Loona, 2001). Research showed that if the parents, the school and the society valued the children's mother tongue and if the children voluntarily could decide to learn their second language, the children had good conditions for developing both languages, their cognition and personality. On the other hand, if their mother tongue was not valued, and they were forced to learn the second language, the children's language development would be negatively affected (Loona, 2001). It can thus be important to take children's opinions into consideration when facilitating for language learning.

Children that migrates to a country with another language than in their home country, has to learn the language of the new place. This is essential for being integrated in the society. Good integration in the society can however also be a key to good knowledge in the language. Some children become bilingual due to migration, while other children are learning two languages from they are born (Loona, 2001) as one or both of their parents are from another country than the residential country. As well as being a communicative tool, language is also a sign of individual identity, group identity and culture (Loona, 2001). The mother tongue is used to pass on cultural values. Loona (2001) thus argues that the decision to either sustain the mother tongue or switch completely to the majority language, will affect the development of the person's ethnic identity.

Despite the practicality of knowing two languages from an early age, mother tongue instruction in school is a disputed topic due to the relation between language, culture and identity. One reason is that some children do not want to receive attention on to their 'otherness', which might happen when they receive mother tongue instructions (Loona, 2001, p. 228). These children might be concerned about being similar to their peers, while other children like it when they receive positive



attention due to their ethnic background (Sand, 2008). It is however shown that bilingual subject teaching and teaching in the second language improves minority children's achievement in school both in relation to language and other subjects (Loona, 2001).

#### 2.4.1 Bilingualism as mother tongue

When the mother and the father speak different languages to the child from it is born, the child gets two mother tongues (Loona, 2001). This is often called *simultaneous bilingual development*, but it can also include the majority language, if this is different than the parents' language (Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007). Even though the parents usually are not very concerned with teaching their children grammar, bilingual children are able to express themselves in both languages, before they are even aware that they are dealing with two languages. Children usually get aware of this when they are about two years old (Loona, 2001). According to Loona (2001), research have shown that children with bilingualism as mother tongue manage to use both languages almost at the same time as monolingual children manage to use their mother tongue. Valvatne and Sandvik (2007) argue that bilingual children are able to develop their linguistic, cognitive and social skills as good as monolingual children. Bilingual children however do not develop both languages as fast as a monolingual child develops its one language. The child is usually better in one language than the other, but their vocabulary in the two languages together are usually as big as a monolingual child's vocabulary.

For parents with different languages, it can be difficult to choose which language to speak to the child. In some families, the parents speak two minority languages. In these families, it is more common to use either one of the parents' languages, or the majority language of the society, so that the child does not need to learn three languages at the same time (Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007). Valvatne and Sandvik (2007) argue that the parents should use a language they feel secure in and manage well when they talk to the child, as communication is important for good contact between the parents and the child, and for the child's development. In cases where there is no common language that both parents are proficient in, they suggest that the parents use their mother tongue when they communicate with the child. The child will thus learn three languages at the same time. After a while, the majority language usually becomes the dominant language for most bilingual children. Valvatne and Sandvik (2007) suggest to find different ways to motivate children to continue learning their mother tongue, such as using children's books, have frequent contact with others that speaks the same language or visit the parents' home country or countries.

#### 2.4.2 Language mixing

Language mixing is very common among very young bilingual children (Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007), but it also occurs among older children who either have bilingualism as mother tongue, or are learning the second language at an older age, as shown in the analysis of this thesis. In previous research, it was often said that the mix in use of language was a sign of a lack of ability to distinguish between the languages. Newer research have however shown that young children often are aware that they are using several languages and can distinguish between which language to speak with the parents (Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007). When bilingual people switch between different languages while talking, this is called *code switching*. Code switching can happen from one sentence to another, which is called *inter-sentential code switching*, but also within one sentence, which is called *intra-sentential code switching* (Theil, 2011). Intra-sentential code switching is more complicated and can even involve Norwegian words with grammar from the other language. Theil (2011) has an example of intra-sentential code switching from a person which is switching between Norwegian and Turkish. As the person is using the Turkish grammar for Norwegian words, he argues that Turkish is playing a more central role than Norwegian for this person. In the analysis of this thesis, it will be used examples from both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code switching.

#### 2.4.3 Additive and subtractive bilingualism

Øzerk (2008) argues that it is important to facilitate for children to become *additive bilingual*. Additive bilingualism means that the child is able to continue developing their mother tongue at the same time as he or she is learning a new language (ibid). By giving children bilingual subject teaching and mother tongue instructions in school, children have a good chance to become additive bilingual. If children's development of their mother tongue is not facilitated for, and children stop practicing their mother tongue after for example migration, they are in risk of a *subtractive bilingual development* (Øzerk, 2008). Subtractive bilingualism implies that the second language is learned on the expense of the mother tongue. Negative attitude towards the mother tongue and lack of support from the people around are some of the factors that can lead to subtractive bilingualism (Øzerk, 2008). To facilitate for the children to become functionally and additive bilingual, it is thus necessary that the children have a supportive environment and possibilities to practice their mother tongue, either it is through bilingual subject teaching and mother tongue instructions, or through social interaction with other people who speaks the same language. Øzerk (2008) argues that

children's bicultural and intercultural identity is affected by their language knowledge. According to him, children should thus get lessons in both the majority language and in their mother tongue.

## 2.5 Belonging and identity

Biculturalism may have an impact on children's sense of belonging and identity whether they are born in the residential country or have immigrated. Anderson (1999) explains how children's identity is formed by their placement 'in-between' cultures with varying circumstances when it comes to behavior, language, thoughts and feelings. The cultural contrast and 'the brokering and merging' (p. 25), can, according to him, be traumatic for the families. Some children do however also see positive sides of biculturalism, for instance when children find it empowering to master several languages (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008).

Sand (2008, p. 27) describes identity as 'the human's inner feeling of who it is, what it is able to and where it belongs'<sup>7</sup>. When the identity takes form, the process is affected by the person's conscious cognition and emotional experiences. The child is developing its identity and its 'self' and 'mind' through social interaction and when it sees itself in relation to others and the society (Mead, 1934 in Sand, 2008, p. 28). As well as the person's own knowledge and ideas of who it is, identity is also shaped by other people's knowledge about and perception of the person (Jenkins, 2008; Sand, 2008). Further, identity is determined for instance by a person's social background, gender, age, education, work, or belonging to different religious or ethnic groups (Hylland Eriksen, 2001). The same categories are also influencing the person's group identity (Sand, 2008). Cultural similarities between people can create a feeling of togetherness which leads to a group identity (Hylland Eriksen, 2001). This feeling of togetherness is what leads people with the same ethnic background to create a social network among each other when living in another country. Hylland Eriksen (2001) argues that the idea of cultural differences is the base of ethnic identities, but that in reality there are many differences between people with the same ethnic background. Sand (2008) explains that in an ethnic group there can be differences of norms of behavior or different values. Common language might be another characteristic for people from the same ethnic group (Hylland Eriksen, 2001), but a child born in Norway of immigrant parents might for example have Norwegian as his mother tongue, and not share language with other people of the same ethnicity. Hylland Eriksen (2001, p. 48) explains that "there can be clear ethnic boundaries without big

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<sup>7</sup> Translated from Norwegian.

cultural variation, and there can be cultural differences without ethnic boundaries.”<sup>8</sup> It is thus imagined cultural differences and not actual differences that create group identities or a feeling of togetherness and separates us from them.

Giralt (2011), who conducted a research about ‘in/visibility strategies’ among children of Latin-American decent in England, explains that children’s proficiency in the local language and their physical traits is affecting how the children are identifying themselves with their peers. By using ‘invisibility’ strategies and keeping silent about their cultural heritage, the children that have few physical traits and accent less speech are able to feel sameness with the British children. Children with more physical traits and a speech accent do, however, tend to feel sameness with other ethnical diverse children. These children were thus selectively making their cultural background visible for the children they were feeling sameness with.

The socialization and formation of identity happens in specific cultural and ethnic contexts and is thus affected by these contexts (Hylland Eriksen, 2001; Sand, 2008). Cultural expectations within a society can be an example of factors that influence a person’s development of identity (Sand, 2008). Norway as a cultural context does for instance consider intrinsic value, independence, self-realization and equality as important, and children are from an early age expected to be free and independent (Hylland Eriksen, 2001; Sand, 2008). After migration, children might find uncertainty in their surroundings, which can motivate them to search for confidence within themselves (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2004 in Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). Christopoulou and de Leeuw (2008) believe that the challenges and burdens of migration is more difficult for children than for adults, and they are thus arguing that children go back and forth between the two cultures ‘converting meanings, confronting differences and searching for similarities’ (p. 240). The children are thus ‘living in two worlds’ where they meet different expectations and demands from the surroundings which might contradict with each other (Hylland Eriksen, 2001, p. 52). In the gap between the two cultures children are negotiating between the cultural values, seeking to find themselves and are developing their hybrid identity (Bhabha, 1994). Sand (2008) suggests that the social norms of a culture can help people receive a feeling of safety and belonging to the group and a mutual understanding between each other. Baumann (1999) sees ethnicity as an identification that is created through social action. He argues that in social science, the ethnicity is contextual,

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<sup>8</sup> Translated from Norwegian.

and thus changing. The way the children's identity is constructed by the circumstances is an example on how children, while coping with the situation, are taking active part in the construction and reconstruction of their lives (Prout & James, 1990b).

As children spend a lot of their time in school, teachers can play an important role in children's development of identity and belonging. Teachers can enhance children's feelings of belonging and strengthen their identity by giving positive attention to their background (Sand, 2008). By making children's backgrounds visible in school, Fandrem (2011) argues that children can learn from each other's cultures. The children must, however agree on that their background is being highlighted in class (Fandrem, 2011; Sand, 2008), as some children are concerned about being similar to their peers, and might not like the extra attention (Sand, 2008), and by focusing on children's cultural background as a resource, rather than on the challenges these children will meet, children's feeling of identity and belonging can be enhanced. Fandrem (2011) does for example suggest that the teacher can try to enhance the immigrant child's feeling of belonging in the class by giving attention to what others can learn from this child's culture, rather than on all the things this child has to learn when arriving to Norway.



### 3 Methodology

This chapter concerns the process from forming the research topic ahead of the fieldwork to the analysis of the data when writing the thesis. Throughout the chapter, I will reflect on the process and the challenges I met while working on the thesis, and how the research took shape when meeting these challenges. I will start with presenting the research field, how the participants were selected and how I got access to the field. Then, I will explain the methodological perspectives of the thesis based in the social studies of childhood where children are studied as social, active beings (Prout & James, 1990b). Further, I will discuss how the methods were constructed in prior of the research with the aim of involving children's perspectives. This is thus a research *with* children and not *on* children. The child participants were actively taking part in the research and sharing their experiences of migration and biculturalism. In the next part, I will present some reflections on the ethical considerations in relation to informed consent, privacy and confidentiality and reciprocity. In the end, I will present my field experiences, before I reflect on the process of transcribing and analyzing the data.

#### 3.1 The research field

##### 3.1.1 Selecting the field and the participants

Before I decided my topic, I considered doing fieldwork in Greece. I soon realized that I might struggle with the language, thus I decided the option closest to that idea: to do my fieldwork in Norway with children of Greek and Greek-Norwegian decent. Another reason for choosing to do the fieldwork with children of Greek and Greek-Norwegian decent in particular, was that I knew where to look for participants and I had several contacts whom I could ask for help. The choice of cities to do my fieldwork in was based on where my contact persons found participants for me. These cities will not be mentioned due to privacy and confidentiality reasons.

My first contact person and participant for the research, I met by coincidence through a common friend before I had decided my research topic. She explained that she works with mother tongue instruction and bilingual subject teaching for Greek immigrant children in primary schools in a city in Norway. I told this teacher about my ideas of doing research with Greek children in Norway. She was very excited about my ideas, and motivated me to work further on it. Later she put me in contact with two families that were interested in participating.

The other participants took a bit longer time to reach. I found the contact information to my main contact person early, but it turned out that this person was difficult to get in touch with. After many e-mails, phone calls and text messages to this person and some of her colleagues, I finally got in contact with her. Once the contact was established, everything went efficiently. I realized that she had read my messages and had already discussed my research project with her colleagues. She had also been in contact with potential participants. Shortly after she contacted me, I met her and a colleague of her, and we discussed my research topic, and I explained how I was planning to conduct the research. She told me that the parents she had been in touch with had been skeptical to take part in my research, partly due to the negative way Greece and Greek people have been presented in media during the last years, in relation to the current economic situation in the country. I explained for them that as a researcher in Childhood Studies, my aim was to learn about children's experiences, and that I had the best interest of the children and their families in mind. I explained that very little attention would be given to the situation in Greece, as I wanted to focus on how the children had experienced migration and life in Norway. When contacting the families again, my contact person informed me that the interest for participating was higher. When writing the introduction to the master's thesis, I did however have to give some more information about the situation in the country than I initially intended, as this had been part of the motivation behind the decision to migrate for several of the families.

This contact person had a good overview over Greek networks, both in her hometown and other cities in Norway, which greatly facilitated the recruitment process. She also gave me suggestions on who I could contact if I needed more participants. Through her, my previous established contact, and through some friends, I got the contact information to eighteen families and twenty-nine children and youths as potential participants, ranging from the age of three to the early twenties. At first, this seemed like too many participants, but I expected that some of them would withdraw from participating. I wanted to focus on the age group from six to twelve. This age group included all the potential participants in primary school-age. The reason for excluding the youngest children was that I felt that my research questions were too abstract for these children to understand, and some of the tasks would require writing skills. One of the questions was even too abstract for the children that took part in the research (See Mind-Mapping 2). Participant observation could have been a more suitable method to use with the youngest children, but I found it difficult to use this method in the families' homes. This method would have been more suitable if I could observe a



group in for example a school or a social gathering doing their usual activities, not to make the situation strange for the participants. Unfortunately, I did not get access to any schools or social gatherings<sup>9</sup>.

Since many of the potential participants decided not to take part, I included everyone that wanted to participate. I ended up having eight families and one teacher as my participants. The children in these families were between seven and eleven years old. I did also include two youths that were between eighteen and twenty-five. Their exact age will not be presented to prevent identification. I decided to include them in the study even though this was a study primarily with children<sup>10</sup>. This choice was not only made because I did not manage to reach out to as many participants as I initially intended, but also because I believed that these participants would be able to give me more in-depth and retrospect reflections than the youngest participants. According to Torstenson-Ed (2007), children are capable of remembering and telling about their memories, but older people tend to tell more detailed stories. I did however experience that a few of the children were giving more in-depth answers than their parents on a few of the questions. Of the participants, five families had migrated to Norway during the last three years and their children had been growing up in Greece. Both parents in these families were Greek. In the remaining three families, the children had grown up in Norway. One parent was from Greece and had migrated to Norway before their children were born, and the other was either ethnic Norwegian or had grown up in Norway.

### 3.1.2 Access to field

Initially, I wanted to visit Greek lessons and do my workshops there, as it would be an easy way of gathering the children living in the same areas. One of my contact persons was negative to this, explaining that getting access to the children this way would be complicated as many people would be involved. I had to get permit from children, parents, teachers and the schools, and if one person said no, I would not have access to the group. The other option was that my contact persons contacted each family and asked if they were interested in participating. That was how we did it, and I got the contact information when the parents had given their confirmation to my contact persons.

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<sup>9</sup> See 'Access to field'.

<sup>10</sup> UNCRC's Article 1 defines children as all human beings below the age of 18 (United Nations, 1989).

Only a few of the potential participants answered my e-mails when I first contacted them. In the first week of August 2014, I contacted the parents again. The schools' summer holiday ended in the middle of August, and most families were on holidays at the time I was trying to prepare my fieldwork. It was therefore difficult to reach out to the parents. The uncertainty about whether my participants were going to contact me and if I had enough participants, was making me a bit worried. However, I spent the time preparing my research methods. By the third week of August, most of my meetings were arranged, and I was not worried anymore.

The parents were very welcoming and the majority of the participants invited me to do the interviews and the workshops in their homes. This made the fieldwork easier, as I did not have to look for a place to arrange the meetings. When visiting the families, I did also get an impression of their everyday lives and how the two cultures were represented in their homes. Only two meetings were arranged in a café. Despite that the cafés were a bit noisy, the interviews and the workshop went very well. When doing research in the participants homes, the settings are never the same, which means that children's engagement will vary, and the researcher must be flexible (Bushin, 2009). The same could be said for cafés. I was very flexible during the research and adjusted my methods to the different situations. Ahead of the fieldwork, I was worried that the parents would think that I was taking up a lot of their time, but in the end, they expressed gratefulness of being invited to participate. I only met each family once and for about two hours, but most of the parents said I could contact them if I wanted more information or if the information they had given was unclear.

## 3.2 Methodological perspectives

### 3.2.1 The social studies of childhood

Within the social studies of childhood, children are seen as active constructors of their social life and their surroundings (Prout & James, 1990b). This perspective has led to active involvement of children in research, both as participants and even as researchers themselves (James & James, 2012a), and they are considered as worthy of study independently from adult perspectives (Prout & James, 1990b). There is a debate about whether research with children is similar of different from research with adults. Researchers tend to see research with children and adults as either the same or completely different from each other (Punch, 2002). Solberg (1996) is among those who argues that there is no need to distinguish between adult and child methods in research, as long as the researcher gets rid of its presumptions of children and focus on the situation studied. I did

however experience that it was easier to create rapport with the children through task-based methods, than for example through an interview<sup>11</sup>. Children and adults are traditionally seen as ‘opposite statuses in society’ whereas children are characterized with powerlessness and adults with power (Qvortrup, 1987, p. 5). Children do thus often tend to perceive adults as more powerful. It is therefore essential to inform children about the importance of their ideas to reduce the power imbalance (Punch, 2002). Punch (2002) argues that by bracketing children into one group, it is a danger of overlooking diversity among children. There are also other diversities within a research context that can be overlooked by dividing the methods into adult and child methods. As childhood is understood as a complex social phenomenon, the study of childhood must thus be done as a multi- and interdisciplinary activity (James & James, 2012a), and the child must be understood within its cultural context (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). The methods should thus be adjusted to the whole research context. When choosing methods, the cultural environment, the physical setting, and age, experiences, competences, preferences and social status of the participant should take into consideration, as well as the researcher’s position and competences (Langevang, 2009; Punch, 2002). The diversity among research participants was important when designing my methods and my research questions. This is discussed further under ‘Methods’.

### 3.2.2 Open, closed and leading research questions

The difference between open-ended and close-ended research questions is that open-ended questions gives room for more detailed answers, while close-ended questions might lead to specific answers. When doing research on topics that has complex issues where the answers are not determined, it is better to use open-ended questions (Carey, Morgan, & Oxtoby, 1996). My research was based in a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach aims to give an understanding of the actors’ perspectives and experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009a). My questions were open-ended to facilitate for the participants reflections and descriptions of their experiences of migration and biculturalism. One of my questions was for instance: “Can you explain how it is to live in Norway compared to Greece?” If the questions are closed or leading, the participant might feel that they have to give a specific answer. E.g., “Do you like to live in Norway?” Leading questions decreases the validity and the reliability of the research results (Knowing Children, 2009b). In one of my worksheets I had two leading questions; “What do you like to see on television? – In which language is it?” and “Which language do you like to read in?”

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<sup>11</sup> See ‘Methods’.

- Why?" By asking these questions, I assumed that the children like to watch television and to read. However, I wanted to find out about children's preferences of language. Whether they liked television or books was not relevant, but it was rather a way of making the questions more interesting to the children. The other questions were open-ended and gave room for the participants' reflections and perspectives.

### 3.2.3 Qualitative research

Qualitative research methods have emerged through the humanities (Mayoux, 2006). As part of the social sciences, qualitative research approaches are commonly used within the social studies of childhood. In the social studies of childhood, emphasis is given to children's understanding of their own experiences (McKechnie & Hobbs, 2004). A challenge with qualitative research, especially with children, is not to impose the researchers' own perceptions. Even if the researcher enables the children to express themselves freely, adults cannot completely understand children's point of view as they are not children anymore (Punch, 2002).

In contrast with quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers collect non-numerical data and the results cannot be generalized to larger groups. Qualitative research is normally focusing on case studies on the micro-level. This gives the researcher the chance to in-depth interaction with the participants (Bui, 2009; Mayoux, 2006), and access to information about his or her life world (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009a). Among usual methods are combinations of informal interviews, participant observation and visual media such as photography and video. With broad and open-ended questions that change and develop over time, the qualitative approach is capable of capturing the different realities of the participants, and the variety of methods gives diverse perspectives on one topic (Mayoux, 2006).

### 3.3 Methods

Based on my own experiences from working with children in different settings including care taking, organizing and facilitating of play activities and excursions, and as a homework assistant, I know that children are not a homogenous group. As among adults, their interests and attention spans vary (Punch, 2002). I wanted to use several methods to get a diversity of data with different perspectives. At the same time, I wanted to consider children's varying interests, age, attention span and language proficiency in Norwegian and Greek. I expected the children to have a less rich vocabulary than the adults (See also Boyden and Ennew, 1997 in Punch, 2002), and I did therefore

make the questions for the children as simple as possible. For instance, while I used words like “challenges and advantages” for the adults, I used “like and dislike” or “positive and negative” for the children.

Some of the methods required writing skills, and I decided I could help the youngest children with writing. Due to the age span, I was thinking that some methods would be a bit childish for the oldest, which stresses the fact that the researcher must see the diversities among the children, and not just classify them as a separate group from adults (Punch, 2002). Luckily, the methods seemed to interest all the children. For the two youths, I used the same research questions, but they wrote their answers as a text on a paper, rather than participating in the methods I had with the children.

### 3.3.1 Constructing the methods

#### *Flexibility in the field*

Initially, I intended to arrange three meetings with the participants. In the first meeting, we were going to have an activity where we could get to know each other and build rapport while the children were introduced to the topic of the research. In the second meeting, I intended to meet the families in their homes for a short semi-structured family interview to get some background information and then have an individual interview with each child. The interview was going to start with the children drawing something related to the topic. Drawings can facilitate for more active participation from children, as it can be a fun and creative method (Punch, 2002). For the third meeting, I was going to gather the children again for a focus-group discussion with mind mapping, to explore their ideas and opinions on how it is to be bicultural and live in Norway.

When the time for the fieldwork got closer and I had started to make appointments with some of the families, while other families spent some time responding to my e-mails, I realized that it would be difficult to gather the families, especially before the individual meetings. The first meeting took place in one of the families homes and instead of having two separate interviews, I interviewed the child and the mother together and integrated my interview guides to one interview. There were different reasons for integrating the interviews. Firstly, I was a stranger to the child. By having a familiar adult present in the research context, the child might feel more confident to participate (Scott et al., 2006 in Pyer & Campbell, 2012). Secondly, it seemed strange to ask for an individual interview with the child, as the apartment was small and the mother would be in the same room anyways. By interviewing them at the same time, we saved a lot of time. I got a lot of interesting

information through the interview, but the child was not very active in the beginning. I did not find interview as a good method to use with children when you have just met, as children need time to build rapport (See e.g. Knowing Children, 2009a). To be placed one-to-one with an adult and be asked direct questions, can be an unfamiliar situation for the child and thus intimidating due to the power-imbalance between adults and children (Knowing Children, 2009b; Valentine, 1999 in Langevang, 2009), therefore I decided to change to task-based methods.

*Reconstruction of the methods*

Task-based methods can be more suitable to use with children as it can make the communication with the researcher more comfortable for the child (Punch, 2002). I realized that it would be easier to build rapport through a workshop with task-based methods, but I included a small semi-structured interview in the end of it. To build rapport is important to create trust between participant and researcher and to encourage the participant’s responses (Kellett & Ding, 2004).

I changed the plan of meeting the children three times, and integrated all the activities into one workshop, as it was difficult to get in contact with all the families and I doubted that I would manage to gather several families for group meetings. Neither I wanted to take up too much of the families’ time (See e.g. Knowing Children, 2009a). The workshop consisted mainly of four methods, a worksheet, two mind-mapping activities and a semi-structured interview. With some of the children, I also included drawing. The interview guide for the parents was turned into a questionnaire. By keeping the parents busy, I could do the workshop with the children with as little influence from the parents as possible (Pyer & Campbell, 2012).

As well as the questionnaires and the workshop, I had a semi-structured interview with the Greek teacher that participated in the research, and I used a research diary to take notes of reflections and observations. In the table below, there is an overview over the different methods and the participants who participated in each of them:

<i>Table 2: Methods</i>	Children (12)	Youth (2)	Parents (8)	Teacher (1)
Questionnaire	-	-	7	-
Worksheet (in workshop)	11	-	-	-
Mind-Mapping 1 (in workshop)	11	1	-	-

Mind-Mapping 2 (in workshop)	5 <sup>12</sup>	1	-	-
Semi-structured interview (in workshop)	11	-	-	-
Drawing (in workshop)	6	-	-	-
Semi-structured interview	1	-	1	1
Questions based on workshop (written answers)	-	2	-	-

### 3.3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire I gave to the parents consisted of twenty questions related to the parents and the children's background, the role of the Greek culture in children's lives, use of language between children and parents, and challenges and advantages of being a bicultural family in Norway<sup>13</sup>. The questions were open and the parents could write freely (See e.g.: Knowing Children, 2009b). The questionnaire was given in English and Norwegian. I chose to use these languages to make it easier for me to manage the data, as I know these languages better than I know Greek, and I knew that all the parents were proficient in either of the languages.

### 3.3.3 Workshop

The workshop consisted of a combination of visual, written and traditional 'adult' methods. Visual and written methods can equalize the power relationship between the researcher and the child (Punch, 2002). By using traditional methods, such as interview, the researcher show that they give value to children's competencies, and that they can be treated equal with adults. Through task-based methods, children can interact with the paper in the beginning while slowly getting to know the researcher, rather than sitting face-to-face all the time (Punch, 2002).

#### *Worksheet*

The first task for the children was a simple fill-in worksheet with questions about the children's leisure time, favorite food, language choice when reading and watching television, and a question about country background (See figure 3). This worksheet was intended as an ice-breaker activity where the children worked independently and I assisted them only when they asked for help. Ice-

<sup>12</sup> See 'Mind-mapping 2' under 'Workshop' to see why the participation in this method was so low.

<sup>13</sup> See appendix 3.

breaker activities can be used to establish a relaxed and comfortable environment between the researcher and the participants (Gibson, 2007). Some of the questions in the worksheet were there just to waken the children's interest while some of the other questions gave me some insight into children's preferences of language and food. It seemed like most of the children enjoyed this activity. I made the worksheet colorful to make it look more interesting for the children.

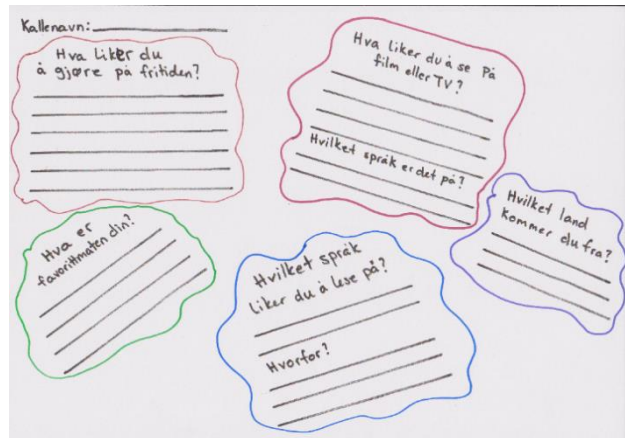


Figure 3: Worksheet

### Mind-mapping 1

The second activity was a mind-mapping activity where the children were supposed to write down what they associated with 'Greece' and 'Greek'. The children wrote their thoughts and ideas on post-it notes and put them on the paper where the two words were written in both Greek and Norwegian. By doing this activity, I wanted to know if I could get a perspective of what Greece means for the children or what attachment they have to the country. This activity can remind of what is called 'spider diagram' (Punch, 2002) where the diagram has a title and the child writes their associations on the legs of the spider. I used only a blank paper with the two words on. The activity worked well the way I did it, but it might have been even better if I had used a spider diagram, as it would look more interesting.

### Mind-mapping 2

The third activity was also a mind-mapping activity where the children were answering how it is to be Greek or half Greek in Norway (See picture). I gave them green and red post-it notes and asked them to write positive things or things they like on the green ones and things they did not like, or challenges on the red ones. To write a list of 'likes' and 'dislikes' is easier than writing longer texts or essays, and the information is

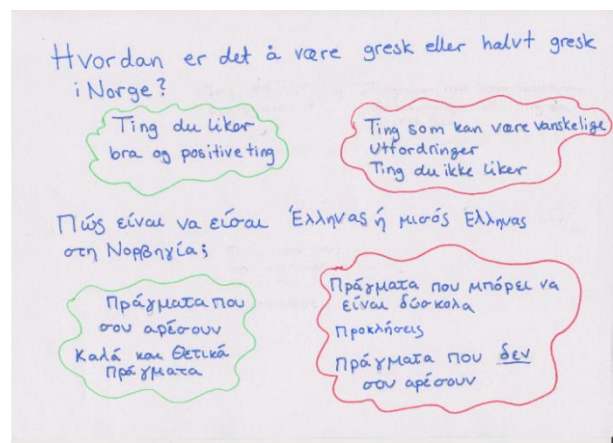


Figure 4: Mind-mapping 2



easier to analyze (Knowing Children, 2009b). I figured out that this question was a bit too abstract for the youngest children in the group, and most of them were actually answering how it was to live in Norway with no regards to their cultural background. Some of the children made comparisons between life in Norway and life in Greece. The two youths did however give me some elaborative answers to this question, as can be seen in the analysis.

### *Semi-structured interview*

In the end of the workshop, I had some additional questions that I wanted to ask the children. In most cases, this was done as a semi-structured interview. With most of the children, I took notes when they were talking, while a few of the children choose to read the questions and write the answers by themselves. I also asked some children to write because I was busy helping their younger siblings that needed more time and assistance for the other tasks. These semi-structured interviews I had in the end of the workshop worked better than the interview I had with the first family. I had time to get to know the children and build rapport through the other more practical methods. It was a good choice to have this method with more direct questions in the end of the workshop when the children had gotten more confident with me (See e.g. Punch, 2002). The Greek children got questions about the migration process, while the Greek-Norwegian children were asked about how it is to grow up with parents from two countries.

### *Drawing*

Before I changed my methods, I wanted to use drawing as an ice-breaker activity as a start of the interviews. Drawings can facilitate for more active involvement of children in research, as it can be a fun and creative method (Punch, 2002). When I met the first family, the child wanted to draw, but when I asked him to draw something related to being Greek in Norway, it was too abstract, and he was hesitating. I ended up letting him choose what to draw himself, and I let him keep the drawing rather than using it in the analysis. Later when I gathered a group of children, I asked them to draw a picture together of a place with the best things from Greece and the best things from Norway. The children were not really following my instructions, and the drawings from this meeting reflected much of the same information as I got through the first mind-mapping activity about what the children associate with the words 'Greece' and 'Greek'. I did not use drawing as a data collecting tool with the rest of the children, as I found it time consuming. I rather used it to keep the children occupied with something if they were done with the tasks before their siblings.

### *Semi-structured interview with teacher*

I had a semi-structured interview with the teacher that was giving mother tongue instructions and bilingual subject teaching to Greek children. She was very engaged and answered most of the questions in my interview guide before I had even asked them. The reason for interviewing the teacher was that she had been in touch with many Greek children through her job. Thus, she could elaborate on how the children had adapted and integrated, their attitudes towards learning Greek in Norway and how they were coping with the challenges of migration. I assumed that the teacher had more insight into the children's situation than I would get by talking to the children only once. As I was a stranger to them, they would not necessarily be as open to me as to their teacher. The teacher was also telling me about her observations of children's play and interaction with other children at school.

#### 3.3.4 Research diary

Throughout the fieldwork, the analysis of the data and the writing process, I kept a research diary with me. During the fieldwork, I wrote down observations I had done during my home visits, ideas that came to my mind while talking to my participants, and ideas for the writing of the master's thesis. After each meeting with the families, I sat down and reflected over my impressions and observations for about thirty minutes, and wrote down all the ideas that came to my mind. While going through my data in the aftermath of the fieldwork, I remembered many things I had observed during the fieldwork that I did not recognize as important in the moment. Many of these things turned out to be important for further analysis and were written down in the research diary. The ideas I got during the writing process were also written in the diary. According to Brinkmann (2012) writing is an important part of the qualitative research, as it is not only part of final stage of reporting the findings, but also an essential part the analytical process. I did not use the field notes much during the writing of the thesis, but as I had spent time writing the ideas and memories down, it was easier for me to remember the reflections I had made during the fieldwork.

#### 3.4 Ethical considerations

When doing research with children, the child has to be respected as a sensitive dignified human being (Alderson, 2004), like all people should be when participating in research. The rights of the child have to be ensured by protecting children from harm, informing children about the

consequences of participating, and their views must be listened to and respected by adults (Alderson, 2004; United Nations, 1989).

#### 3.4.1 Informed consent

The participants, including both adults and children, shall be adequately informed about the consequences of taking part in a research before giving their consent. They must be made aware of their right to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to participating, as they should not feel pressure to take part of the research. The participants must be given time to decide, and they have to be informed that they can withdraw from the research at any time without explaining the reason (Alderson & Morrow, 2011).

When contacting the parents for the first time, I sent them an information letter to inform them about who I was and about my research<sup>14</sup>. Later I made an informed consent form for the parents to read and sign before the research<sup>15</sup>. The informed consent form contained information about the reason for and the intention with the research, what their and their children’s participation would involve, how the information about them would be treated, and that the participation was voluntary.

Parents’ consent is usually necessary before getting consent from children due to judicial reasons (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). From the children, I got oral consent after the parents had confirmed that they were allowed to participate. I explained for the children who I was, why I wanted to talk with them, that it would be anonymous, that participation was voluntary, that they did not have to answer all the questions if they did not want to, and that I would publish my thesis in the university. All the children gave me oral consent to use the information they gave me.

#### 3.4.2 Privacy and confidentiality

The cities in which the research took place are not mentioned in the thesis due to participant’s privacy. To secure each participant’s anonymity, I collected participants’ first names, contact information and participant numbers on one paper. The data collected was marked with numbers from the participant list that were given in a random order, for example ‘Family #10’. To separate children in the same family without revealing their age, I marked their papers with for example ‘Oldest #10’ and ‘Youngest #10’. The data was stored in a safe place separate from the participant list, and separate from the signed informed consent forms. In the worksheets, the children were

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<sup>14</sup> See appendix 1

<sup>15</sup> See appendix 2

asked to fill in a chosen nickname. These nicknames will not be used in the thesis, as I understood that the children use some of these names among each other and when they play videogames, thus they might be identified through the nicknames. In the analysis, I decided to group the participants into different groups according to their answers on the different questions, and I also separated them as Greek or Greek-Norwegian. This way, the groups are changing between each questions, which makes it more difficult to distinguish between the participants.

#### 3.4.3 Reciprocity

I felt that I had to give something in return for using my participants' time, and I decided to give each child an eraser that they could use while writing or drawing during the workshop. I brought a box with animal shaped erasers in all colors. After the workshop was done, each child could pick some marbles from a jar. I also had a lollipop for each child. I asked the parents if I was allowed to give these to the children before the children saw them. Some of the parents said no to the lollipops. I made sure that the children did not know about that I was going to give them anything before I had gotten their informed consent. The reason for this, is that consent for participation must be given freely and the child should not be tempted to participate because of treats (Nuremberg Code, 1947 in Alderson & Morrow, 2011). I did not give anything for the parents, except from one occasion where the workshop took place in a café, and I bought a coffee for the mother.

#### 3.5 Field experiences

The fieldwork went very fast and I did not use as much time as expected. Ahead of the fieldwork, I imagined that I would have meetings every day. Since four of the families were gathered in one meeting, I saved a lot of time. I was expecting that more families would participate, so I had set aside much more time than I actually needed. The research took place in different cities in Norway during a period of eight weeks in August and September 2014, where six of the weeks were used for fieldwork, preparations and transcribing (see table 3). The first two weeks were used for preparation of fieldwork and communication with participants through e-mail. During the next one and a half week, I had interviews and workshops with seven different families, and the last week of August was spent transcribing the collected data. I reminded the remaining families about the research, and gave them one more chance to contact me. None of these families replied. The second week of September I got in touch with a mother that I had talked to half a year before, and I arranged

a meeting with her and her children. I also got in touch with one of my contact persons, the Greek teacher, and arranged an interview with her.

*Table 3: Fieldwork calendar*

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
During the end of June and the whole July, I participated in a 120 hours Greek course in Athens to prepare for the fieldwork.						
4 Aug Buying paper, pencils, erasers etc.	5 Preparing interview guides for family interviews	6 Sending individual e-mails to all parents	7 Preparing interview guides for child interviews	8 Translating interview guides to Greek	9	10
11 Reading articles	12	13 Reading articles	14 Editing interview guide	15 Sending e-mails to arrange interviews	16 Preparing for the first interview	17 <b>Interview with the 1<sup>st</sup> family</b>
18 Transcribing	19 Changing to more 'child friendly' interviews	20 Transcribing the rest of the first interview	21 Changing methods again, now to workshop.	22 <b>2<sup>nd</sup> meeting</b>	23	24 <b>Group meeting with four families</b>
25 <b>4<sup>th</sup> meeting</b> E-mail: trying to reach more participants.	26 Transcribing	27 Transcribing	28 Transcribing	29 Transcribing	30	31 Went to Greece for Greek exams
1 Sept	2	3 Oral exam	4	5	6 Written exam Back to Norway	7 No e-mails from potential participants.
8 Transcribing	9 Contacting another family - meeting 27 <sup>th</sup>	10 Transcribing	11 Transcribing	12 Transcribing, e-mailing with the teacher, arranging when to meet	13	14
15 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> : Working with introduction to the master's thesis and continuing transcribing data.						
22	23 Preparing teacher interview	24	25 <b>Interview with teacher</b>	26 Transcribing and preparing worksheets	27 <b>Meeting with the last family</b>	28 Transcribing

### 3.5.1 The role as a researcher

The researcher must be clear about his or her position as a researcher, as the child can feel obliged to participate if the relationship becomes too much like a friendship (Knowing Children, 2009a). During the fieldwork, I was clear with explaining my position to the children, before starting the research. I did not use the word researcher, as they might not be familiar with that word. I told them that I was a student that wanted to talk to them to learn more about how it is to grow up with two cultures and that they know more about the topic than me.

At least two of the children perceived me as a teacher. One child told me that she wanted me to be her teacher after knowing me for about thirty minutes. This made me feel that I had succeeded in building rapport with here. Another child said “Ευχαριστώ για το μάθημα”, which means “Thank you for the lesson”. My task-based methods might have reminded the children about worksheets they get in school, which could have strengthened their impression of me as a teacher. I did also help some of the children with spelling. When children perceive the researcher as a teacher, they

might expect the researcher to give them guidance and directions (Kellett & Ding, 2004). I wanted the children to answer the questions independently and tell me about their opinions. The three oldest children tended to speak quiet freely, while most of the younger children were more silent and needed more guidance. I felt that it was more a matter of little time to build rapport rather than children's perception of me that made some of them less talkative. Most of the children did however give me an answer to all the questions, even though some of the answers were a bit shorter, but I do not think that the need for guidance have affected the empirical material.

Since I conducted most of my research in the children's homes, it was a possibility that the children could perceive me as a guest. "Homes are first and foremost families' spaces" (Bushin, 2009, p. 18), and a researcher is not a natural part of it. In one of the meetings, a mother had gathered several children and their parents in her home to make it easier and more efficient to conduct the research. I was alone with the children in another room than the parents, and as an adult, I felt responsible for the children. I saw myself switching roles between researcher and caretaker several times. At the beginning, when I said we were going to fill in some worksheets, all the children were following. A short while after we started with the tasks, some of the children were not so willing to participate because they wanted do watch television, and they were quite noisy. I asked them to calm dawn, as one of the parents in the house was sleeping upstairs. As participation was voluntary, I said to the children that wanted to watch television that they could either do the tasks they were given, or go out to play in the garden so that the rest of the group could concentrate. At this point, I understood that for the child living in the house I was a guest, and it seemed like he found it weird that I was telling them what to do, but they listened to me and headed towards the garden. The mother living in the house stopped the children at the door and asked them to go back and sit down until they were done with the tasks I was giving them. She explained to them once again why I was there, and that their experiences about living in Norway while being Greek or half Greek was important, because I wanted to work with children in the same situation, and I did not know as much about the topic as they did. The children were convinced to sit down, but I still had to make sure the children understood that participation was voluntary (Knowing Children, 2009a). I asked them to sit down until everyone was done, but said that they did not need to answer my questions if they did not want to. One of them was still not very interested and answered only a few questions. I did thus give him a paper to draw on, not to let him get bored, and I gave more of my attention to the other children.

Apart from being perceived as a researcher, teacher or guest, I have to consider how I, as a Norwegian person researching people with immigrant background affected the situation. As I was interviewing both children, parents and a teacher, I was able to see differences and sometimes contradictions in their answers. The parents did for example mention very few or no challenges of migration and integration. The teacher explained that she had the opposite impression and argued that the parents might try to show me as a Norwegian that they are satisfied with how they are received in Norway or that they have succeeded in integrating and adapting to the society. If I had been a Greek immigrant myself, and shared their experience of migration and cultural background, they might have given me better access to their thoughts and experiences. The positionality of the researcher as an insider or an outsider do thus influence the communication with the participants (See e.g. Merriam et al., 2001). Some of the parents were however asking me whether one of my parents were Greek as I told them that I spoke the language. I said to the parents that I was Norwegian, but the children might not have been aware of my nationality, as I had made worksheets in both Greek and Norwegian and told them that they could speak to me in the language they felt more comfortable with. Therefore, I think the children's answers are not affected by my positionality as Norwegian. The teacher was very open and gave me in-depth information to all my questions. As the teacher was a friend of a friend, and I had met her a couple of times before the interview, we had already built rapport. Moreover, as she is a mother tongue- and bilingual subject teacher and I am a student studying bicultural childhood, we were thus sharing the interest and some experience in this field. This common ground could have increased the openness and engagement in the conversation.

### *Power-imbalance*

In society, children are normally not used to be treated as equals by adults (Punch, 2002). Therefore, they need some time to get used to the relationship with the researcher. This relationship must be based on trust, which means that the researcher has to build rapport with the participant before starting the research (Knowing Children, 2009a). By telling the children that I wanted to learn from them, I wanted them to feel more competent than me and to reduce the power-imbalance between us. As the researcher's appearance is affecting the power relationship with the participants, I was thinking a lot about what to wear when meeting the children. I initially had a blue t-shirt with the red logo of the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, but when I asked my sister, she said it was too formal. I ended up wearing a neutral shirt, but I made sure I was wearing some colors to

try to blend in with the children. During the interviews and the workshops, I was always making sure I was sitting at the same level as the children (Knowing Children, 2009c). If they were sitting on the chairs, I was sitting next to them, and if they were sitting at the floor, I did the same. This way I felt more on an equal level with the children, and that they would perceive me as less authoritarian than for example a teacher or a parent.

### 3.5.2 Challenges

Most of the challenges have been mentioned before, and can be summed up shortly. The first challenge I faced was to reach out to my participants. Second, I had to change my methods to make them more suitable for the children, and I realized that asking a child to draw on one specific topic was not that easy, as the child wanted to decide what to draw itself. One of the workshops and one interview was done in a café. I thought this would be challenging due to a lot of people and noise, but the only challenge turned out to be the space on the table for my stuff and that the children were eating while they were going to write. I solved this by making the workshop to some kind of informal conversation or interview where I wrote all the answers myself. Another challenge was not to ask leading questions. In my interview guide, I had only open questions, but during the first interview, the child was less talkative, and I realized that I was asking some leading questions. The child was giving the answer I indirectly asked for. In this case, I did not consider the answer as valid and did not use it in my analysis. Parents' presence in research with children and language was other challenges that will be described separately.

#### *Parents' interference*

Parents' presence can be both a challenge and an advantage in a research. As I wanted children's point of view, I was afraid that the parents would give their point of view on behalf of their child if they were going to sit next to them, or that they would affect the children's answers. An advantage is, as mentioned, that the child might feel more confident when their parents are present. In most cases, the parents were answering the questionnaire in the same room, but they were paying little attention to my conversation with the children. I felt that the children both got to talk freely without interference by the parents, and could feel more confident as the parents were close by. Parents' interference was a challenge only in one meeting where both parents were present. One of the parents was filling in the questionnaire, and the other was sitting together with the children. I felt that the parent that was sitting with the children was guiding the children too much. I therefore



said in a polite manner that I wanted the children to come with their own opinions, and the parent gave the children more time for their own reflections.

### *Language*

When contacting my participants for the first time, I imagined that it would be easier to get their attention by writing to them in their mother tongue. I got some help to translate the information letter about the research to Greek. As some parents were Norwegian, I sent both the Greek and the Norwegian version of the letter to the parents. According to Merriam et al. (2001) it is assumed that access to a research field is easier the more similar the researcher is to the participants. Thus by using the Greek language to communicate, the potential participants might have perceived me as more similar to them than if I had been using Norwegian or English. The informed consent form that the parents signed was however made only in English and Norwegian. As I had established the contact with the families, I decided to save the extra time it would take to translate the document to Greek.

My contact persons informed me that some of the children were not yet fluent in Norwegian. I could use the parents as interpreters, but I wanted to have the chance to communicate with the children without too much interference from the parents (See e.g. Pyer & Campbell, 2012). To include an external interpreter was not an alternative, as I imagined that the children would be less talkative if they had to speak with both the researcher and an interpreter. I already knew some Greek, but my level was not high enough for conducting an interview and at the same time manage to understand all the answers and come with follow-up questions. I decided to look for a Greek course that could fit in to my schedule. Since the children's school holidays lasted until the middle of August, I had all June and July free. I found a seven weeks intensive course at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens that fitted perfectly into my schedule. After the course, I felt more confident about conducting parts of the research in Greek.

With the parents, I spoke mostly Norwegian and English, but it was practical to be familiar with the Greek grammar when they were giving examples of how the children were mixing Greek and Norwegian. Considering that I was communicating with several of the participants in their second language, the research questions had to be simple both for children and adults. The majority of the children spoke Norwegian, but with two of the children, most of the communication happened in Greek. They did know Norwegian quite well, but their vocabulary related to my questions was not

so strong. I had made all the worksheets in both Greek and Norwegian so that the children could choose the language they preferred or were more confident with. I got help with the Greek translations to make sure the worksheets were free from grammatical mistakes. For some of the other children I had to translate only specific questions. The language course made the interaction with the children easier, as it gave me the possibility to switch language whenever the children did not understand. I did also save a lot of time, as the parents did not need to translate and they could answer my questionnaire at the same time as I spoke with their children.

### 3.6 Data transcription and analysis

The transcription is part of the initial process of the analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009b). During the fieldwork, I was continuously taking notes in my research diary of all the impressions I had after each meeting with the participants, and I had made a lot of reflections over everything I had seen and heard. These notes helped me a lot while transcribing the recordings and the other data, as well as it gave me ideas about what I could do differently for the next meetings, or about topics I wanted to include in the thesis. The analysis was thus a continuous process from the start of the fieldwork until the end of the writing of the thesis.

When transcribing the data from for example a recorded interview, the content is transformed from one form to another. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009b) argue that the data goes through two abstractions. In the actual interview, the researcher can hear the participants' tone of voice and intonation and can see their bodily expressions. When listening to the audio recordings of an interview, the bodily expressions are lost, and when the data then is transformed into a written form, the tone of voice and intonation is gone. When transcribing my interviews, I included all emotional expressions of the participants that I could remember or hear through the sound recordings, such as laughter, excitement or irritation. This helped me to remember the participants' attitude in the discussion, like in this interview sequence with one of the families:

Me: *Do you remember what you were thinking when you got to know that you were going to move to Norway?* [Directed towards the son]<sup>16</sup>

Son: *No*

Mother: *It was a bit... He did not know about it.*

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<sup>16</sup> [ ] The brackets are here used to explain the situation.

Me: *No?*

Mother: *No, he went to school, and when I went to pick him up...*

Me: *Yes?*

Mother: *...I told him the same day that we were going to travel to Norway. Do you remember that [name of the son]<sup>17</sup>? [Speaking cheerfully]*

Son: *Yes*

Mother: *I said "I have a surprise. We are traveling." [Laughing]*

Son: *And then I said "To Norway?" [Cheerful]*

Mother: *Yes, because we had been talking about Norway...*

Me: *Yes?*

Mother: *... and the possibility to move.*

Son: *It was after school. And I got a lot of books. [As cheerful as his mother]*

By describing the participants' emotional expressions, the reader can understand the participants' attitude. In this case, the reader can understand that the mother and the children were positive about their decision to migrate to Norway.

I used a recorder only in the interview with this family and with the teacher. Both the family and the teacher seemed comfortable with the use of the recorder, but I decided to not use it for the other meetings. The main reason for this was that the other methods were more practical and most of them were written. The demand for a recorder was therefore not so big. Whenever we had a conversation, I took notes of what the children were telling me. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009b) argue that extensive note taking can be distracting or interrupt the conversation. In my first interview, I took notes as well as recording, as it was the first time I was using a recorder, and I wanted to be sure that I did not lose any information. The note taking was sometimes interrupting the free flow of the conversation, as the participants had to wait for me to finish writing before we could continue to the next question. I did however experience that by taking notes, my participants

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<sup>17</sup> [ ] If the brackets are used within the sentence, the content is changed due to confidentiality.

got more time to talk between each question. Even if it sounded like they were done talking, they suddenly remembered other things to add. When using the recorder, I jumped to the next question much faster, and the participants got less time for further reflections.

The first interview transcription, I did the two following days after the interview took place. The tone of voice and bodily expressions of the participants were fresh in my memory, and these were thus described in detail in the transcriptions. The second interview I recorded, which took place after all the other meetings<sup>18</sup>, was very long and contained much more information than the first one. This interview was thus transcribed little by little over a period of a couple of months, and I did not remember all the participant's physical expressions. In some small parts of the interview, there was some background noise, and I could neither hear, nor remember what the participant or I was saying. The transcription that was done immediately after the interview was thus much more detailed.

The data was collected in three different languages, and I thus had to translate it to English when integrating it in the thesis. In addition to the two abstractions Kvale and Brinkmann (2009b) describe, I would argue that by translating the data from Greek and Norwegian, it went through a third abstraction. Some expressions or terms can be difficult to translate to another language, and the data can thus lose some of its meaning through the translation. In some cases, I could not easily integrate the participants' quotes in the text, but I rather had to describe the content of the sentence with my own words, to make it as close as possible to what the participant had expressed.

I organized the data in four different word documents according to the methods I used. All the data had numbers that indicated which family or child it came from (Knowing Children, 2009d). The two recorded interviews were transcribed in two separate documents. Seven parents filled in the questionnaire. These were transcribed in one document, and all the worksheets and discussions from the children were transcribed in another document. The participants' answers were sorted out by question, so that all the answers of one question were grouped together. The transcriptions of the interview recordings was very time consuming, but the interviews gave more in-depth information than the questionnaires, as I could ask follow-up questions. The questionnaires were built up on the same questions as the interview guide, but it was easier to transcribe, as the answers

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<sup>18</sup> Sound recorder was only used for the first and the last meeting, as I had a workshop and a questionnaire for the other participants.

were short and concise. During the interviews, both the participants and I sometimes drifted away from the topic. This did sometimes lead to irrelevant discussions, but other times it let to information that was very interesting for the project. The worksheets from the children were quiet easy to transcribe as their answers were short, even though some of the writing was hard to read due to the mix of Greek and Latin letters.

While transcribing, I was constantly reflecting about which theory I could connect to the data. The more times I read through my data transcriptions, the more ideas I got about theory to include in the thesis, and I was also reflecting on how the different methods had been working in comparison with one another. The data transcriptions, which I initially saw as a resource for the analysis chapter, did thus turn out to be one of the main sources of inspiration for both for the methodology chapter and for the theory chapter. When starting the analysis, I was worried about how I could turn all my data into a discussion of my research questions. The pages of transcriptions were many, and it was hard to figure out how to grasp it (See e.g. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009b). Then, I ended up sorting out all the interesting and relevant data according to the research questions, so that I could get an overview of the data I was going to discuss. Finally, I reorganized the data according topics, looking for similarities and differences among the participants, connected it, and discussed it with the relevant literature.

### 3.6.1 Validity and reliability

To get valid and reliable information from the participants, there are several things to take into consideration. The researcher has to build rapport with the participants so they can feel confident when talking to the researcher. Children as well as adults can decide to lie to the researcher, but this is less likely if the participants and the researcher trust each other (Punch, 2002). The information given by the participants can be affected by things going on in their life at the time when the research is conducted. My participants had for instance just returned from summer holidays, and as seen in the analysis, their answers seem to be influenced by this. As mention above, the participant's perception of the researcher can also affect the answers. I felt that in the group meeting and when two siblings were taking part together, the children were sometimes repeating each other's answers, but the children did also come up with individual answers. By using a variety of methods, the researcher can get different perspectives from the participants. The validity and reliability will in this way be increased. The data analysis will however be affected by the reliability

of the researcher and his or her interpretations of the participants' views (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009b; Punch, 2002), and by the transformation of the data from oral language to written text (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009b). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009b) argue that the validity of the transcriptions can be increased by letting two persons transcribe the same piece of data. As my data contained confidential information, I did not have this option. A few times during the writing of the analysis, I realized that some parts of the transcriptions were unclear, or I was unsure about if some of the words were my own comments, or the participants' words. I figured out that by listening to the recordings or reading through the questionnaires or worksheets one more time, I could see whether I had understood the data correctly, and the validity of my transcriptions and analysis increased.

In the following two chapters, I am analyzing the data, discussing it in relation to children's experiences of migration, the representation of Greek and Norwegian culture in their lives, and how their identity is shaped in relation to cultural practice and integration in the society.

## 4 Analysis: Immigration and adaption

As the world is getting more globalized, an increasing number of children are experiencing international migration, and are facing the challenges of leaving their home country and integrating and adapting in the new place. These children are later confronted with a bicultural childhood, which can lead to both challenges and empowerment. Five of the eight families that participated in this study had been living in Norway between one and three years when the fieldwork was conducted, and the children in these families have thus experienced migration. In this chapter, the focus will be on these children's experiences both from their own perspectives and from the perspectives of adults. To begin with, I will look at the families' reasons for migration and children's reactions to that they were going to move to Norway. In the next part of the chapter, I will discuss children's and parents' experience of the arrival to Norway, with focus on the most discussed topics in the conversations with the participants. These include children's experiences of climate changes, cultural adaption, creation of new friendships and networks, integration in school, and the participants' perceptions of children's safety and independence in Norway.

### 4.1 Reasons for migrating to Norway and children's reactions

Migration can be motivated by many different factors, and it can be either a voluntary decision or forced by the circumstances in the country of residence (See e.g. Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). The participants mentioned several different reasons for migration. There was however one similarity between all the families. Either one or both parents were unemployed before they immigrated to Norway. Only one parent explained that unemployment was the reason for migration, but the children in three other families said that this was the reason. The parent or the child in the last family did not mention unemployment as a reason for migration, but during the interview, this mother did also explain that she was unemployed in Greece. This parent and one other parent did, however, explain that their main reason for migration was the economic situation in Greece. All the families seem to be affected by the economic situation in the country, whether this was the reason for migration or not.

Several children were aware that their parents were unemployed in Greece. The children in three families seemed to be concerned about their parents' difficult economic situation. When I asked the children in one family why they moved to Norway, the oldest child explained: "Because we

didn't have so much money, I think. I don't know. It is mom and dad who know that"<sup>19</sup>. The younger sibling did however not hesitate about her answer: "We didn't have so much money in Greece and it took time for mom to find a job"<sup>20</sup>. Another child explained that her mother had to get economic support from her grandfather. The daughter did not like the way they were living. She seemed to be aware of her mother's economic hardship and the adult concerns of economy and work seemed to affect her well-being. In the interview with the last of these families, it was the mother that explained her son's awareness of their economic hardship. The mother had been discussing with her son about the possibilities to move to Norway. The son had told her that he would have to go to Norway to check if he liked it before he could decide if he wanted to live there. Later he told his mother that, "We don't have so much money, so we can move right away"<sup>21</sup>. This boy did thus see the rationale for migrating and was agreeing with his mother to migrate to Norway, even if he would prefer to see the country first. The mother did not inform the child about when they were going to move before the same day. The mother went to pick up the son at school and told him "I have a surprise! We are going to travel!"<sup>22</sup> The son, who was participating in our conversation then added cheerfully "And then I said 'To Norway?'" The son seemed like he had been very excited about the news to move to Norway, but he did also tell me that he was excited because the mother gave him many new books that day. The son might have been aware that they were going to move very soon as he seemed like he was prepared to go, even if the mother informed him the same day as they were traveling.

Two parents said that they wanted to live in a country outside of the EU. One of these wanted to live in a country with stability, while the other wanted to live in a safe country with a good educational system. Several parents did also mention that they want to live in Norway for safety and stability reasons, and they experienced Norway as a more organized country. The notion of insecurity and instability in Greece might come from the unstable economic situation in the country, which is also affected by the current political situation<sup>23</sup>. One child explained that the air on the way to school in Greece was filled with teargas after demonstrations from the day before, and her eyes were hurting. Whether this was something that happened regularly or only once, was

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<sup>19</sup> Translated from Norwegian.

<sup>20</sup> Translated from Greek.

<sup>21</sup> Retold by the mother.

<sup>22</sup> The quotes from this conversation are translated from Norwegian.

<sup>23</sup> See "Introduction and background".



not made clear. Due to the difficult economic situation and the restrictive politics of the country (See e.g. Utenriksdepartementet, 2014b), there have however been several demonstrations in the country the last years, and the child might thus have had this experience more than once.

The perception of risk, safety and danger is, according to Backett-Milburn and Harden (2004), socially constructed, and it is thus varying between people. While several parents experienced that they moved from the insecurity in Greece to the safety and stability in Norway, one young participant, a youth, experienced that she was leaving the safety of the known in Greece. She explained that “Being Greek in Greece is a safe blanket”, whereas “In Norway I would be a foreigner”. One mother explained that she wanted to move to Norway, as it is a “safe country” in relation to that it has a good educational system and due to the circumstances in Greece at the moment. Despite that the circumstances in a place can be unstable, the home environment can offer a person a feeling of safety (See e.g. Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008), as it is a known and familiar place, or it can be like “a safe blanket” as the youth expressed it. When talking about Greece as “safe blanket”, the youth might refer to a safe and familiar place like one’s bed, which can be associated with a safe place for rest. The parents and the youth are here expressing different notions of safety. From the youth’s perspective, safety is addressed to the known and familiar, which she decided to leave. In Norway, she did thus have to start building a new network and get used to the new environment. The notions of safety from the parents’ perspective, is related to the political and financial circumstances in Greece and to their economic hardships, and Norway was in these terms considered as a safer place to live.

The youth explained a motivation for migration that was different from most other participants’ motivations. The youth wanted, firstly, to reunite with her mother and her sister, but she did also make the decision based on her educational opportunities in Norway. She explained that the educational system in Greece is not so good, and that she saw “an interesting challenge and opportunity to learn a new language and to experience a different culture.” While her mother and her younger sister seemed to be concerned about the economic and political situation in Greece and the consequences of this, the oldest daughter was more concerned about her education. The youth’s concerns about education is something that might come from her age, as she is on the verge of adulthood and has to make decisions for her future. Several parents and this youth were talking about the good qualities of the schools in Norway compared to Greece, and some were thinking

that these schools would give better opportunities for their children. The children were also talking positively about the schools in Norway. Almost all the parents seemed to be concerned about their children's future when they decided to migrate to Norway. This corresponds with the study with immigrant children by Christopoulou and de Leeuw (2008), where concerns about the future also were involved in the families' motivation for migration<sup>24</sup>.

The children in the different families experienced the news about moving to Norway very differently. In one family, the father had already migrated to Norway almost a year before the children and the mother. The separation from the father was very difficult for the children and the parents explained that the son had often been upset during the months of separation. The children had not been involved in the discussion about moving to Norway. As the father was moving a while before the rest of the family, the migration was a gradual process. The children were very excited about moving, but this was mainly because they were going to live together with their father again.

The children in two families explained that their reaction to that they were going to migrate to Norway was a mix of excitement and sadness. One child was excited about living with her cousins in Norway, but she was sad to leave her relatives, and she explained that her grandfather was crying when they were leaving. Her sister, who migrated before her, said it was a bit scary to migrate, as she did not know Norwegian. This child experienced it as they were moving to Norway twice, as they went to Greece after some months to bring her younger sister to Norway. The second time they went to Norway, she said it was ok, and she seemed happy to see her friends again. Another child said that despite that she was very excited, she was thinking "Oh no, we are going to move!"<sup>25</sup>, and it seemed like she was a bit worried to leave. She explained that she was sad to leave her friends. Her older sister, which decided to migrate on her own initiative, said that she was mostly excited to migrate to discover what "Norway had to offer" her. She was however sad to leave her friends and the safety she had in Greece.

#### 4.2 Arrival in Norway

Even though it was sad to leave friends and family behind in Greece, all the children seemed excited about the arrival to Norway with all the new impressions, with the snow, the green parks or the new people. Some found friends easily, others spend some time to get friends and some did already

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<sup>24</sup> See "Theoretical framework".

<sup>25</sup> Translated from Norwegian.

have friends when they came. Although all the children experienced migration and immigration differently, there is something which is common for all the child participants that had experienced migration. As mentioned in the theory chapter, childhood is constructed and reconstructed through time and space (See e.g. Hendrick, 1990; James & James, 2012c). Childhood is understood different from one place to another, which means that there are several childhoods (James & James, 2012c). In relation to migration, children are thus moving from one social ‘reality’<sup>26</sup> to another (James & James, 2012c), and their experience of childhood and family is changing as they integrate and adapt to the new society (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). In the following, children’s experience of adaption and integration will show how some aspects of children’s lives have changed after migration.

Although there are many differences between Norwegians and Greeks, a Greek teacher who I interviewed, explained that it is much easier to adapt and integrate in Norway for Greek children, than for children that have migrated from countries outside of Europe. This is because there might be bigger cultural differences between Norway and non-European countries, than between Norway and Greece. Further, she explained that the younger the children are, the easier it is to adapt. The teacher suggested that it is not good to migrate with children, as there are many challenges of migration, and it is better for children to be without this experience. One such challenge is language barriers. However, only a few children mentioned that the language barriers were challenging when they arrived to Norway, and most of them seem to have learned Norwegian fast. The Greek teacher explained that the children were not struggling with learning the language, and that the families were easily adapting to the school routines.

According to the teacher, the parents have a very important role in relation to how the children experience migration and how quickly they adapt. She argued that the parents influence their children, thus if the parents have a negative attitude to the host country or are insecure about whether they want to stay or go back, the children might adopt this attitude. She has however experienced that most of the children in her classes have adapted to the changes and to the culture, and that they participate in more leisure activities than when they arrived. Even though the teacher argued that migration is not good for children, she explained that it is good for them to experience different cultures and different ways of life.

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<sup>26</sup> James and James (2012c) talk about different social ‘realities’. See “Theoretical framework”.

In the following, I will present the main topics that were discussed in relation to the participants' arrival to Norway. The participants introduced most of the topics themselves, such as climate changes, friends and networking, integration in school, and safety and independence, while I brought up the topic about cultural adaption.

#### 4.2.1 Climate changes

When migrating to a country with a different climate than the home country, this can lead to excitement or it can make the adaption more challenging. The climate changes that the children experienced when they came to Norway were exciting for most of them. Several children were talking about how they spent their first days visiting the green parks and how exciting it was to play in the snow during their first winter in Norway. One of the children's experience of the snow shows how the climate can be fun and interesting at first, but then becomes usual:

*After a week, it started to snow. Then I was just happy and wanted to go out and play. When the winter was over, I was not so happy. The year after I did not get so happy, because I did not like snow anymore. When the snow came, I went to eat supper and I went immediately to sleep.*

In Greece, the parks are not so green, and it rarely snows. By spending more time in the parks, and playing in the snow, the reality of these children's outdoor play thus changed when they moved to Norway. Even if most children were excited about the Norwegian climate, some of them did however miss the warmer weather in Greece. The Greek teacher explained that her pupils complain a lot about the weather. Even if many of the child participants were talking about how they like to visit the parks or play in the snow, the teacher explained that many of her pupils are spending a lot of time indoor, which she explained, is "a very Greek thing". In contrast, Norwegian parents are very concerned about their children spending sufficient time outdoors.

#### 4.2.2 Cultural adaption

Cultural adaption can be related to many things. Some examples can be differences in social norms and values, cultural traditions or the way of life. One child explained that she was not familiar with all the social norms in Norway and told about the first time she was going to a birthday party. She was unsure of how a birthday is celebrated in Norway and did not know how to act or what kind of present to bring, and did thus feel embarrassed. In Greece, name days are also more important than birthdays, and birthdays are celebrated differently than in Norway. This child's experience

shows that birthday celebrations are socially constructed, and thus varies from culture to culture. Another girl also explained that she was invited to a birthday party, but she was just excited to be included by the girls in her class. The birthday invitation was thus a symbol of social inclusion.

Almost all the Greek families mention that they celebrate the Norwegian national day, the 17<sup>th</sup> of May. The national day is celebrated with big parades in the city centers where people often are dressed in the national costumes and are waving with Norwegian flags. One of the parents thought it is important that the children are introduced to the Norwegian culture, as they are living in Norway. In the house of one Greek family, I saw three Norwegian flags lying on a rack by the entrance, which I assumed they had been using when they were celebrating the national day. One of the Greek-Norwegian families had both a Norwegian and a Greek flag as decoration in the house. The mother told me that the flags are not symbolizing anything special, but they want to have one flag from each country that they can use when they celebrate either the Norwegian or the Greek national days or other national holidays.

Some families explained that their Christmas celebration was more Norwegian than Greek. This will be described further in the next chapter, as it is discussed in relation to how the families continue to celebrate the traditions they were celebrating in Greece, and how some of these traditions are reconstructed and adapted to the new culture.

Cultural adaption is not only visible through celebrations, religious practices or norms, but also through change of habits or living arrangements. In Norway, it is very common that children can have friends staying overnight in the weekends, either because the children think it is fun, or because the parents help each other out if one of them need a babysitter. The Greek teacher explained to me:

*I remember there was once a girl who told me that she was invited to stay the night over at a friend's house, and the mother said 'No, because you're really young to do this'. So, so as you know, in Norway from [kindergarten<sup>27</sup>] you can take one child to your place and the other child can take [your child<sup>28</sup>] too, and this is how you help also parents too, and you get really social with this.*

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<sup>27</sup> Translated from the Norwegian word 'barnehage'.

<sup>28</sup> The sentence is made simpler.

This mother might be unfamiliar with the habit of Norwegian families to let children stay overnight, or she might be skeptical, as she is not used to this. The mother in another Greek family did however tell me that they had accustomed to this habit. The son explained to me, with great excitement, that he had a bunk bed in his room so that his friends could sleep there. The house this family was living in was quite small and had only one bedroom. The mother was sleeping in an enclosure part of the living room, and did thus prioritize to adapt to this habit, rather than to share bedroom with her son. This mother was however very concerned about adapting to the Norwegian way of life to be well integrated.

#### 4.2.3 Friends and network

A person's ability to adapt to the new society do, according to Sluzki (1992), depend on the effort of developing a new network. Through friendships, children can feel included and that they belong in school (Devine, 2009) or elsewhere in the new society. Some children experienced that it was easy to get friends when they came to Norway, and they were playing with other children despite the language barriers. One child thought it was a bit like starting in first grade again when she started school, as all the children were new to her. She found it a bit difficult to get friends, but the little Norwegian she had learned before arriving to Norway helped a lot. Further, she explained that she had known her friends in Greece since early childhood, and she felt that it was more difficult to get friends at an older age.

According to Anderson (1999), children can experience stigmatization among their peers when using a foreign language. One mother explained that her children had experienced some teasing from the neighborhood children. She talked to her children about this, and they figured out that it would be better if her daughters speak Norwegian to each other instead of Greek when they are playing with their friends. To keep silent about one's cultural heritage for the purpose of being included by others, can be as strategy of 'invisibility' (Giralt, 2011). In her study with children of Latin-American decent in England, Giralt (2011) found that the children use strategies of 'invisibility' or 'visibility' either to conceal their otherness and feel sameness with English children, or to demonstrate their sameness with children of the same decent or with other ethnical diverse children. The two Greek children did thus seem to use an invisibility strategy to conceal their otherness to be included by their Norwegian friends in the neighborhood.

Some of the children already had some friends when they arrived, as their parents knew someone in Norway prior to migration. Two of the children, who were siblings, had some Greek-Norwegian cousins, and they were living in their cousins' house until they moved by themselves a while later. The youngest child seemed to be happy to live together with her relatives, as she explained that she enjoyed playing with her younger cousin. The mother also explained that her brother had been living in Norway for many years, and they were thus familiar with the Norwegian culture through his family. A mother in another family had a Greek friend in Norway with a son the same age as her son. This friendship was among the reasons why she decided to go to Norway and not to another country. She and her son were living in her friend's house until they got their own house. As these three children's first friends in Norway were either Greek or Greek-Norwegian and lived in the same house, the children had someone to play with that also spoke their mother tongue. These children might thus have experienced a more gradual change of their lives than the other children did, as they had a small network that spoke the same language as them when they arrived. One of the children who had cousins in Norway did however feel scared when she was left by her mother at school, as she did not understand what the others were saying and had no friends to play with. She explained that it took some time to get good friends to have fun with.

The migration patterns of the families in this study revealed that it is common to migrate in sections, where some family members migrate first and others follow later on. This was the case for three of the five immigrant families. In one family, one child migrated with the mother while the siblings were staying in Greece with their father, and later one of the other children came along. In another family, the father migrated first, and the children and the mother came when the father had found a job. In the last family, the youngest daughter migrated with the mother, and the oldest daughter came later. She explained that her "mum and sister since they had moved a while back had everything ready". As it can be difficult to build a network when arriving to a new place (Sand, 2008), the family members that migrated later had the advantage that their family already had settled and started to adapt in Norway. To have a network when arriving to the new society, can increase the family's well-being, as the process of establishing a well-functioning network can be very stressful and it can even take several years (Sluzki, 1992). Sluzki (1992) argues that after migration, the members of the family might try to fulfil the functions of the network they left, such as emotional support that previously might have been coming from a close friend. The family members are however not able to fulfil all the functions that a social network has (Sluzki, 1992).

The Greek teacher in the study explained that the adjustment to the new culture could go faster and much easier when the family has relatives in the country they are migrating to. For some children, it seemed like the migration went easier when they already had friends or relatives in Norway when they migrated, as they were happy to spend time with them after arrival. For the children that first were separated from their father while he was looking for work in Norway, the migration was positively related because they were missing their father. These children did however have a difficult time during the separation, and the migration process might thus have been very difficult for these children, even if the father might have started to establish a network for their family in Norway.

Children's interaction with other children varies, according to the Greek teacher. Some days they play happily with friends, and other days they play by themselves or talk about how they miss their siblings. Some children are in the same school as their siblings and are often playing with each other in the breaks. The teacher believes that some children perceive their siblings or their parents as their best friends in Norway. Migration can however lead to strengthened family ties and increased trust among those who travel together, as they meet challenges and difficulties on their way (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). With many new impressions and challenges, the children might thus seek to their family members for comfort. The teacher explained that the children talk a lot about their families, even if they have friends in school. She finds this worrying, as she is used to that children in that age are talking mostly about their friends. Further, she explained that the children tend to have more international friends than Norwegian. Her pupils however also play with Norwegian children and who takes the initiative for interaction is varying. The Greek children do however take the initiative to play more often than the Norwegian children do, as they seek to be integrated. Some of the teacher's pupils have Norwegian relatives, and they are thus more integrated than the families that migrated without any network in Norway. The teacher argued that the younger the children are, the faster they learn Norwegian, and the easier they get Norwegian friends.

One of the fathers that participated in the study explained that his son was included in play by the other children from the time he started school. They were often playing football together, and the friends did not seem to mind that he did not speak Norwegian yet. In a study with Iranian immigrant children in Norway, Mirsadeghi (2013) found that language knowledge was not important in games



like football. She argues that such games have their own languages, and speaking Norwegian is thus not a requirement for taking part in the game. This means that children's interests and preferences of play activities, combined with the requirement of language knowledge in these games, can be crucial to what extent children are included in play.

#### 4.2.4 Integration in School

Some municipalities in Norway have receiving classes or schools for newly arrived migrant children to help with the integration of the pupils and to facilitate for them to learn Norwegian. Several children that participated in this study were in such receiving classes. Some children told me that they liked these classes, as they were learning Norwegian there. In addition to going to receiving classes, some children got mother tongue instructions by a Greek teacher either in their school or through afternoon classes with other Greek or Greek-Norwegian children. Some children also received adapted Norwegian lessons through the public school. The mother tongue instructions and the adapted Norwegian lessons in the public schools are restricted for children who are not yet proficient in Norwegian, and these children might also get bilingual subject teaching if necessary (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 1998).

One father was amazed by the high quality of the educational system in Norway. He especially appreciated the way the immigrant children are included in school, for example, through receiving classes and adapted Norwegian lessons. The father was also very positive about the high level of specialization among the teachers. One of his children's teachers in Norway told him that children usually adjust easily, and he confirms that this was the case for his children.

Sand (2008) argues that integration is a two-way process, which means that the immigrants are adapting to the new society, while the society is also adapting to the immigrants. In Norway, immigrants are for example given room to sustain their culture, as well as they are expected to integrate in the Norwegian society (Sand, 2008). Through mother tongue instructions and bilingual subject teaching newly arrived immigrant children get the chance to sustain their language which is a part of their culture. The Greek teacher explained that the children are also learning about Greek culture through the mother tongue instructions, as the language books they use also include cultural aspects. Further, she explained that the teachers are flexible when organizing the lessons, and they can thus decide which topics to talk about. If for example it is the national day of Greece, they can have a discussion about the backgrounds of these celebrations and how the days are

celebrated in Greece. One of the functions the mother tongue instructions and the bilingual subject teaching have together with basic Norwegian lessons is, according to the Curriculum of Basic Norwegian for language minorities, to strengthen immigrant children's learning of Norwegian so that they can follow the regular instructions thought in Norwegian (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2007). The Curriculum of Basic Norwegian for language minorities states that "one of the main goals for instruction in basic Norwegian is the development of linguistic confidence and self-assurance" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2007, p. 2). The combining of basic Norwegian lessons, mother tongue lessons and bilingual subject teaching is also meant to increase intercultural understanding through mutual cultural exchange. The teacher can thus use children's previous language learning experience to promote intercultural understanding (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2007). Mother tongue instructions, bilingual subject teaching and basic Norwegian lessons are meant to last until the child is proficient enough in Norwegian to participate in the regular classes. The Greek teacher did however argue that there is an upper limit of about three or four years, probably due to budget constraints, and that the child has to take part in the regular classes after that, without consideration to their proficiency in Norwegian.

#### 4.2.5 Perceptions of children's safety and independence

The last topic that will be discussed in relation to integration and adaption is children's safety and independence in Norway. Previously, issues of safety were discussed in relation to the economic and political situation in Greece. In this section, the increased feeling of safety will be discussed in relation to children's increased independence and freedom to play outdoor unsupervised by adults. Several parents and children told how safe they felt in Norway compared to Greece, and how this lead to increased independence among their children. For some parents this was a good thing, while others felt that it was challenging.

Independence is an important cultural value in Norway (Hylland Eriksen, 2001; Sand, 2008) which for example is visible through children's mobility and freedom to play outdoor by themselves (See e.g. Kjørholt, 2003). As children adapt to their peers or as their parents adapt to the parenting style in Norway the children might thus become more independent. Several participants mentioned that when they were living in Greece, the parents had to bring their children to school, as it was not safe for the children to go by themselves. In Norway, most of the children can go by themselves to school and play outdoor without adult surveillance. One girl explained that she was happy that she could cycle to school without her parents or go by herself to the supermarket, as she could not do

this in Greece. According to one mother, it is safe for the children to go to school by themselves in Norway, as the cars have duty to yield for pedestrians. In Greece, it can be more dangerous to cross the streets as the cars and especially motorcycles are often not stopping for pedestrians. In a study from England, it was found that children's independent play was regulated by parents anxieties about children's safety, most commonly in relation to traffic and strangers (McKendrick & Valentine, 1997). Similar behaviors towards children's safety was found in a study by Vincenten, Sector, Rogmans, and Bouter (2005) conducted in fourteen EU countries. To prevent children from risk, whether it was form traffic accidents or other risks, one of the most common behaviors of the parents was to watch their children while playing.

The distance between children's homes and school, leisure activities and friends' homes can be crucial to children's independent mobility (Fyhri & Hjorthol, 2009). All my participants were living in urban areas where the schools are many, and most children did thus live within a short distance from their school. As the urban areas in Norway are much smaller than the urban areas in Greece, this might also have contributed to the participants increased feeling of safety in Norway. One mother did however explain that as her daughter still was in a receiving school a bit far from their home, and she had to bring her daughter to school every day. As children become more independent and are able to do more activities unsupervised than when they were living in Greece, they are not only integrated and adapting to Norwegian childhood, but their experience of childhood is also changing (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008).

Several parents regard it as positive that their children have become more independent after they moved to Norway. One mother explained that her parenting style is more similar to the Norwegian than to the Greek style, as she wants her son to be independent. Further, she explained that she does not want to be overprotective towards her son and claims that she is not a very typical Greek mother. Another mother also described Greek parents as more protective towards their children than Norwegian parents.

The Norwegian Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion (2012-2013, p. 6) wants "to ensure that young people are able to make their own independent choices", but they are also aware that they thus are facing the challenge of respecting the different parenting styles among families with immigrant background. Even though the parents reckon it safer for the children to walk or play by themselves outdoor in Norway, some parents also find their children's increased

independence challenging. One mother explained the difficulties of being a Greek parent and raising her children in Norway, because:

*We have learnt it in a totally different way in Greece. We had “control” over our children in how or where they can play or react. Here things are looser. They wish to be more free and we try to adjust to it. But it is difficult to grow them up in the new way.*

This mother finds her children’s independence challenging and contradicting with the way she is used to raise them. Even if she feels that she is losing her authority over them, she respects their agency and tries to adapt to the more independent way of raising children in Norway. Even though the children enjoy their independency, the teacher argued that they might unconsciously feel that they have to follow the same habits as in Greece and that their parents might dislike that they become more independent, even if they allow them. The teacher explained that the children thus might experience a conflict within themselves. The encounter with new social norms and values can lead to parent-child conflicts or tension. This can happen if the children are adapting to the new society while the parents are still following the norms and values they are used to form their culture (See e.g. Foner & Kasinitz, 2007). Although the families did not mention such conflicts, the teacher claimed that there is a constant conflict within the children, as they always have to negotiate between the Greek and the Norwegian norms and culture, and the children might feel that they have to act in a specific way to satisfy their parents.

One mother explained that she feels very safe in Norway, but that one experience had made her scared. One day when she was going to her Norwegian class, she left her child in the living room outside to wait for her. This was a private school, and she felt it was safe to leave her child there. When the mother returned, a woman was telling her that she was not allowed to leave her child by itself, and that she could report her to the child services<sup>29</sup>. The mother was shocked that she could not leave her child in the room next to the room she was in. The mother and the other person might in this situation have had a different perception of risk and safety (Backett-Milburn & Harden, 2004), based in their Greek and Norwegian cultural understanding and perception of ‘good’ parenting. Now that the mother is aware of how people might react, she thinks it is ok that people care about how you treat your children. It might be surprising for the parent to experience that she cannot leave her child alone for a while inside a house while she is in a room inside the same house,

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<sup>29</sup> Barnevernet.

when Norwegian children are thought to be independent, and are allowed to go many places outdoor by themselves. Immigrant parents can thus experience some kind of child independence paradox, where the parents are in risk of being mistaken for neglecting their children if they let their children be a little more independent than what is the norm.

#### 4.3 Summary

In this chapter, the families' reasons for migration, and how the children have experienced the challenges of integration and adaption have been discussed from both children's, parents' and a teacher's perspectives. When integrating and adapting to a new society, some parts of the family's way of life, cultural values and practices are sustained, while others are changed and adjusted to the new context. This is thus showing how the families lives and the children's childhood is reconstructed and changed through migration (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008; Hendrick, 1990; James & James, 2012c).



## 5 Analysis: The role of the Greek culture in children's lives

Bearing in mind that both Greece and Norway are Christian and European countries, one might expect that there are few socio-cultural differences. However, according to the adult participants, and some of the children, this is not the case. A difference that most parents emphasized was how the state functions. They described Greece as unstable, while Norway as more organized, stable and safe. In this chapter, I am going to look closer at how the Greek culture is reflected in the Greek and the Greek-Norwegian children's families. The participants' relation to the Greek culture will be discussed in relation to the use of language, food habits, celebrations and traditions, visits to Greece and contact with relatives in Greece, and contact with people of Greek or Greek-Norwegian origin in Norway. In the end, I will discuss how the representation of the Greek culture in children's lives can contribute to further development of their Greek identity and belonging. To begin with, I will look at children's associations with Greece to get an idea of how they think about the country while they are living in Norway.

### 5.1 Children's associations with Greece

In the association task, the children were asked to write down or tell about their associations with 'Greece' and 'Greek'. Their answers were connected mainly to typical holiday memories, familial memories and food. One group of children was also asked to draw a drawing with the best from Greece and the best from Norway. Their drawings reflected their associations with the two countries. Here I will talk about the children's holiday memories and familial memories. As I was talking with the Greek teacher about her pupils' stories of the summer holiday, this will be included. Children's associations related to food are included in the subchapter 'Food'.

#### 5.1.1 Greece as 'holiday memories'

When imagining 'Greece' or 'Greek' the most common associations, whether they were immigrant children who had lived around two years in Norway or were born in Norway, were mostly related to memories of their annual summer vacation in Greece. Half of them related 'Greece' with visits to the beach and different beach games. Several also associated the country with ice cream, which is a good example of how the connotations of Greece are articulated as typical 'holiday memories'. Five of the eight families in the study are in Greece only during the summer, and it is thus logical that they associate Greece with summer activities, but some children that are visiting Greece several times a year were also thinking about summer holiday memories. It is interesting how these children's associations and memories of Greece are very similar to Norwegian's ideas of Greece

or other typical summer holiday destinations. When one Greek and two Greek-Norwegian children were drawing Greece and Norway<sup>30</sup>, the drawing of Greece was connected to their associations of Greece as ‘holiday memories’, as the drawing was of a sunny beach with palms. Their drawing of Norway showed a rainy day with the sun coming out behind the clouds. This drawing was reflecting the weather the day I was there, as well as the previous days, as it was both sunny and raining every day. The nice summer memories that these children talked about can remind of what Åkesson (2007) found in her study with young adults in Sweden with immigrant parents from Cape Verde. She found that most of her participants had a ‘romantic’ picture of Cape Verde when telling about their holiday memories. She got the impression that an important part of the diasporic community of the Cape Verdeans in Sweden was built on the discussions and dreams about their fantastic holiday memories.

The Greek teacher had another impression of her pupils’<sup>31</sup> stories of the summer holidays. When she asked them about what they had been doing during the summer or how they thought it was to be back in Greece, they only gave her short answers telling her that, “It was ok”. Some of them told her that it was nice to see their family and friends, but she explained that the children did not seem very enthusiastic when they were talking about their holidays. She found this strange, because when she has been in Greece herself, she is very enthusiastic, and she tells about everything she has been doing. When she asked about how it was to be back in Norway, the children explained that they were happy because they have much more activities to do in Norway. Further, the teacher explained that the families of her pupils are working hard to adapt in Norway, and are not too nostalgic about Greece. The children in the study were also enthusiastic to be back in Norway after their holiday and were looking forward to go back to school and to see their friends. This might be a sign that the families have succeeded in integrating in Norway and establishing a sense of being ‘at home’ in the Norwegian society. One child also stated that she preferred Greece as a country to visit during the summer rather than reside. Even though most of the children associated Greece with holiday memories, it is difficult to tell if they were enthusiastic or not about going back to Greece, as most of them were writing key words on a paper. I did thus not have any help from the use of body language or tone of voice to consider how excited they were. The children’s key words were however related to nice and fun things, which makes it easy to assume that they were more

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<sup>30</sup> See the cover picture.

<sup>31</sup> Not the same children as I was talking with about summer holiday memories.



excited than the teacher's pupils. The teacher did however explain that her pupils were not very motivated about taking Greek lessons while living in Norway<sup>32</sup>. Thus, when asking the children about their holiday memories when they are in a Greek lesson, which they are not interested in participating in, it might lead to less exciting answers. Her pupils might thus have had better holiday memories than they expressed.

#### 5.1.2 Familial memories

The association task also revealed that Greece represented family for a third of the young participants. These participants had in common that their departure from Greece was only one year before, which might have had an impact. Two siblings told me that they missed their families, without further details. Two other siblings elaborated more of their memories<sup>33</sup>. The oldest child in this family explained that "Greece... That is my country or my language." Continuing, "My family. My school and my friends. I am also thinking about grandma and grandpa."<sup>34</sup> The younger sibling told me:

*I like to be with my family. I think about grandma and grandpa. I am with my dad, and we are eating dinner with the whole family. I like to be with my family.*<sup>35</sup>

These two children's answers show that they have a strong affiliation and feelings of belonging to Greece. The father and their other siblings were still living in Greece when the study was conducted, and the youngest child seemed to miss spending time with her whole family together. They associated Greece with togetherness and family unification. These children and the two other children who associated Greece with their family did not mention any summer holiday memories even if they go to Greece only during the summer. The meeting with one of these families did however take place a month later than the meetings with the other children, and this might thus be the reason why they did not give any references to their summer vacation.

Slightly less than half of the Greek children associated Greece with familial memories, and slightly more than half associated it with holiday memories. The children that associated Greece with holiday memories were either born in Norway, or had been living in Norway more or less around

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<sup>32</sup> Participation in Greek lessons will be further discussed under "Language".

<sup>33</sup> Different from the other children, I asked these children what they visualized if they closed their eyes and thought about 'Greece'. By asking the children to visualize 'Greece' rather than just to explain what they think when they hear the word might have led to the more detailed associations.

<sup>34</sup> Translated from Norwegian.

<sup>35</sup> Translated from Greek.

two years. The fathers in two of these families were still living in Greece. Whether the children had close family members in Greece did therefore not seem to be essential for their associations to either 'holiday memories' or familial memories. The length of the stay in Norway might however have had an influence, as the children that had been living shortest in Norway were associating Greece with familial memories. It can thus seem like the children are distancing themselves more from Greece the longer they live in Norway. The study was however conducted just after the children returned from their summer holidays, and the children's associations might thus have been different if the study was conducted during the winter.

## 5.2 How is the Greek culture practiced in the children's lives?

The participants told me a lot about how both the Greek and the Norwegian cultures are represented in the children's lives. They were telling me about use of language, food they like, about travels to Greece, about their relatives and about how it is to be Greek in Norway. When I talked with the Greek-Norwegian children about how it is to be half Greek, most of them were not sure what to answer. One mother explained that the children are not always aware of what is Greek and Norwegian, as the parents not always explain this to their children. If they eat Greek food, the parents do for example not tell the children that the food is Greek. Some children do also see themselves as more Norwegian than many other children in school, as some schools in the bigger cities have a high percentage of immigrant children. In the following, I will look closer at how the Greek culture is reflected and maintained in the children's lives and how this is affecting children's development of identity and belonging.

### 5.2.1 Language

#### *Everyday language*

Children's language proficiency in Greek and Norwegian was varying a lot. Some children spoke both Norwegian and Greek fluently, while other children spoke either fluently Greek and a little bit Norwegian or fluently Norwegian and a little bit Greek. One of the Greek-Norwegian children spoke both languages fluently, as both the mother and the father have been speaking their mother tongue with him since he was born. He has thus been learning both languages simultaneously. The children in another Greek-Norwegian family did also learn the languages from birth, but Norwegian is the main communication language in their family. The mother does however speak Greek to the children when she is alone with them, or when the father, who does not know Greek, is not supposed to understand their conversation. The youngest child did only know a little bit

Greek, and her older siblings speak, according to the mother, quite good Greek. The children in the remaining Greek-Norwegian family did only know a little bit Greek, as both parents have been speaking Norwegian to the children since they were born. These children did however start learning Greek when they started primary school.

The study revealed that the Greek children's age when leaving Greece was crucial for their ability to write and read in Greek. Several of the Greek children came to Norway either just before or soon after they started primary school in Greece. These children did therefore have little time to learn to read and write in Greek before they migrated. They were thus learning the Greek and the Norwegian alphabet simultaneously. All of them were however fluent in speaking Greek. Some children were also fluent in Norwegian, others spoke very well, and two of them could only have simple conversations. These children might learn Norwegian better than Greek, as it is very common that the majority language become the main language for bilingual children (Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007). Valvatne and Sandvik (2007) thus suggest to have frequent contact with other people from the same country so that the children can continue to develop their mother tongue. If the children have little or no contact with their mother tongue, they might be prevented from developing the language, or even experience a subtractive bilingual development, which means that they start forgetting their mother tongue (Øzerk, 2008). This is unfortunate for the children, as they might lose their ability to communicate with relatives or friends in their country of origin. An additive bilingual development can, on the other hand, lead to functional bilingualism which means that the person has the language competence to handle everyday situations in both languages (Øzerk, 2008). The Greek teacher told me that she could see that Norwegian is becoming a more dominant language among her pupils. In the bilingual subject teaching, the reading and writing is in Norwegian, but the teacher always speaks Greek to the children. They thus frequently hear the Greek language from the teacher. Most of the Greek participants were also using only Greek at home. As all the children frequently hear the Greek language through either Greek lessons, at home or both, they seem to have good conditions to further develop the Greek language. Even if the immigrant families communicate mostly in Greek at home, some of them use Norwegian in some situations, such as when they are doing homework. One mother said that they sometimes read Norwegian books, for example about Vikings. She also explained that she sometimes uses simple phrases in Norwegian when she talks to her son, such as "*Kom!*" (English: "*Come!*"), even if she normally uses Greek. This introduces the next topic, which is code switching.

### *Code switching*

When children are learning several languages at the same time, code switching is a common phenomenon. The mother in one of the Greek families explained that her son and his Greek friends are switching between Greek and Norwegian when they speak together. Sometimes her son uses both Greek and Norwegian in the same sentence, as for instance: “**Το** voksne **μας έκαναν** kjefte”, which translates to “**The adults were yelling at us**”<sup>36</sup>. What the boy is doing here is, as described in the theory chapter, called intra-sentential code-switching, and involves a switch between languages within one sentence (Theil, 2011). The mother did also give me an example of how the son was conjugating Norwegian words with Greek conjugation, such as in the phrase “**Όχι, δεν** hoppαγα”, “**No, I was not jumping**”. The ending ‘-αγα’ which is used for some verbs in the simple past tense form ‘aoristos’ in first person singular in Greek was added to the Norwegian word for ‘jump’. The child used this word, even if the mother had just used the correct form of the word in Greek. Theil (2011) includes this kind of code switching within the term intra-sentential as it is within the same sentence. Further, he argues that the grammatical framework that is used can show which language is the dominating for the person. In this case, Greek is the dominating language. When I was visiting a Greek-Norwegian family, I could find similar patterns of intra-sentential code switching. The son said to his mother: “**Μαμά! Θέλω να φοράω** langbukse!”, “**Mom! I want to wear trousers!**”, as he wanted to change from his shorts. The child might not have found a word in Greek to use for the term ‘langbukse’, and he did thus use the Norwegian word. His mother explained that he seldom mixes Greek and Norwegian, but sometimes uses Greek plural endings with Norwegian words. As an example, she explains that the son sometimes says ‘trappes’ instead of ‘trapper’, which is the Norwegian word for ‘stairs’. This child is thus using the Greek endings, even if his strongest language is Norwegian.

Most participants, including myself, were also using inter-sentential code switching during the period of fieldwork, which imply that the person is switching language from one sentence to another (Theil, 2011). I for example used English to speak to some parents, while I spoke mostly Norwegian to the children. When I wanted to speak to the whole family together and the parents were not fluent in Norwegian, we spoke Greek. When switching between all these languages, it happened as well that the parents or I switched language from one sentence to the other. The

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<sup>36</sup> The bold words are in Greek, while the others are in Norwegian.

children also switched language dependent on to whom they were talking, or dependent on the topic of the discussion. When they were lacking the vocabulary for some of the topics we were discussing in Norwegian, we switched to Greek. This did thus show children's ability to master the different languages and their ability to distinguish between when and to whom to use which language. According to Valvatne and Sandvik (2007), researchers were previously claiming that code switching signaled children's unawareness of that they were speaking two languages. Newer research do however show that bilingual children are aware that they are speaking two languages, and are able to distinguish between which language to speak with which parent. Children are able to adapt to their parents' expectations of which language they should use. Valvatne and Sandvik (2007) explain that if the mother wants the child to speak only one language to her, and the father thinks its ok that the child is switching between languages, the child might speak one language with the mother, and switch between languages when speaking with the father.

### *Preferences of language*

Although bicultural children often are bilingual, I found in this study that they might have a language of preference. The preferred written or oral language can be the same or different. Three of the Greek children in this study had no preferences in use of language, as they felt they managed to use both. One of these had lived in Norway for two years, while the two others had been living only one year in Norway. Two Greek children preferred to read in Greek as they knew it better than they knew Norwegian. These two children had already started school in Greece before they migrated and had thus learned to read in Greek. All the children that were born in Norway preferred to read in Norwegian, as this language is easier for them. One of them pointed out that he preferred Norwegian because he is born in Norway, and Norwegian was also his mother tongue, as he started to learn Greek later. All the children that moved to Norway before they started school in Greece or during their first year of school explained that they preferred to read in Norwegian as they found it easier than Greek.

Most, if not all, the Greek children spoke better Greek than Norwegian. Yet, many of them chose to fill in the Norwegian version of the worksheet, as most of them were more familiar with the Norwegian alphabet. A child in one of the Greek families wrote in Greek even though he knew the Norwegian alphabet better and had to ask his father for each letter. He wrote some words in Greek but with the Latin alphabet. It seemed like the child wanted to challenge himself, and maybe he

saw the Greek worksheets as an opportunity to practice writing Greek. One of the other Greek children was most comfortable with speaking Greek to me and I expected her to pick the Greek worksheet. However, she chose the Norwegian worksheet because she did not know the Greek alphabet. The Greek teacher explained that her pupils do also find it challenging to write in Greek and that they tend to write Greek with Latin letters. When they write with the Greek alphabet, the pupils are frequently asking her which ‘I’ or ‘O’ they should use, as the Greek alphabet has several letters or letter combinations with the same sound.

### *Parental reasons behind bilingualism*

All the young participants take or have been taking Greek lessons, except from the Greek youth, as she knew Greek fluently when she came to Norway. Some of the Greek children have Greek mother tongue lessons integrated in the public school. In some cities, the children have the possibility to take private Greek lessons in the afternoon together with other Greek or Greek-Norwegian children, and several participants are doing this. As all the children have been taking Greek lessons, it shows that the parents are concerned about their children learning Greek. However, their reasons differ.

One mother explained that she wants her son to participate in the Greek lessons, as she wants him to become bilingual. She thinks it is good for the cognition, and she does not want her son to forget a language that he already knows. According to Loona (2001) and Valvatne and Sandvik (2007), research from after the 1960’s till today have shown that bilingualism can lead to mental flexibility and increased ability to form concepts. Even if the mother prefers her son to participate in the Greek lessons, she explained that if the son does not want to participate, and she knows about it before the lessons have started, he is allowed not to go. If the lessons have started, he has to complete the year. Loona (2001) argues that if children’s language learning in both languages is appreciated by others, and children voluntary can decide to learn the languages, they have good conditions for becoming functional bilingual and for developing their personality and cognition. It is thus good that the mother gives her child the chance to decide. The mother thinks it is more important that her son is proficient in Norwegian as they are living in Norway. It is important for her that he adapts to the place where he lives, and she is not concerned about sustaining her son’s Greek identity.

For some parents it was obvious that their children should take Greek lessons as it is their mother tongue, and it seems like the children were not included in the decision. One mother explained that

she wanted the youngest daughter to take Greek lessons, as it is important that she is able to express herself in Greek. Some parents wanted the children to take Greek lessons due to the social aspect, as they get to know other Greek and Greek-Norwegian children. For one mother, this was the main reason why she wanted her son to participate in the lessons. According to Loona (2001), language can be a tool for developing both individual and group identity. As most children meet other Greek and Greek-Norwegian children through the classes, this might facilitate their development of a group identity as Greeks residing abroad. The use of Greek language can also affect the development of the children's individual identity, as cultural values are communicated through language (Loona, 2001).

#### *Children's bilingualism as empowerment*

Even if it can be challenging for the children to learn two languages at the same time, bilingualism can also lead to empowerment. The Greek teacher told me that her pupils were not very motivated when taking Greek lessons, even if they in general are hardworking pupils. In the beginning, they did not understand why they were going to have lessons in Greek while living in Norway and already struggling with learning Norwegian. She explained that the parents are however pleased that their children receive Greek lessons. The teacher believes it is very important that the children continue learning Greek, as children's associations and understanding of terms in the different languages are overlapping; if you know a term in your mother tongue, it is easier to learn it in the new language. Valvatne and Sandvik (2007) explain that when children learn a second language, they often use the terms they have already learned in their mother tongue and connect the content of these terms to the sounds of the second language. In this way, a well-developed mother tongue can be a tool for learning new languages. Further, the teacher thinks it is important with mother tongue instructions because the Greek language is part of the children's socio-cultural heritage. In spite of the pupils' demotivation in the teacher's classes, several child participants, including two of her pupils, experienced bilingualism as an advantage. Unfortunately, I did only talk with one child about his thoughts about having Greek lessons. This Greek child explained that it was a bit boring, as it is easier for him to read and write in Norwegian, and thus he likes better to learn Norwegian. The boy did however enjoy being able to use the language when he is in Greece. He seemed to be aware that there are advantages of being bilingual, and this could thus have been a motivating factor for him to continue taking Greek lessons, even when his mother explained that it was voluntary.

Several other children also seemed to feel empowered by their bilingualism. One Greek-Norwegian boy emphasizes that it is advantageous to know Greek when they travel to Greece, as it enables him to speak with his friends, including his Greek cousin. One Greek girl had discovered that we use some Greek terms in Norwegian. As an example, she mentioned that they were learning about ‘photosynthesis’ in the science lessons, and she was excited that she already knew this term which originate from the Greek word ‘φωτοσύνθεση’. The girl could thus share her knowledge with her classmates, and she explained that her friends seemed to admire that she could understand this and other terms originating from Greek.

The children in one Greek family explained to me what they thought about being bilingual. The oldest child told me that she likes it,

*Because if it comes a Greek man who does not know Norwegian when I am in Norway, I can understand him. In Greece, I can understand a Norwegian man.*<sup>37</sup>

This girl seemed to have reflected over the advantages she has of knowing the two languages, and how she can use her language skills to communicate with people from both Greece and Norway. She also seemed concerned about helping others who do not understand the other language. Her younger sister explained that she is happy to know Norwegian, as she wants to teach her father and her younger sister the language as soon as they move to Norway. She explained that if she teaches them Norwegian, it will be easier for her father to find a job, and her sister will know the language before she starts school.

Both girls felt empowered by learning a new language, and want to use their bilingual skills to help or to teach others that do not understand one or the other language. Even though there can be many challenges of migration, some experiences might also lead to empowerment. The oldest daughter in this family felt afraid when she first arrived to Norway, as she did not know the language and could not understand what others were saying. Her younger sister told me that she felt embarrassed of the same reason, and that she cried when her mother left her at school. To not know the language, can thus lead to disempowerment, but as the children were learning Norwegian, they seemed to feel empowered by later being able to communicate in two languages. In a research by Christopoulou and de Leeuw (2008), a young girl feels empowered by knowing two languages, as

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<sup>37</sup> Translated from Norwegian.



she, similar to the girls in this family, experienced that she could use the language as a tool for communication and mediation.

### 5.2.2 Food

The Greek culture in the children's lives is strongly represented through food habits as the families often eat Greek food at home. One mother said that her son sometimes complains about the food in Norway, as the cheese and the milk do not taste the same as in Greece. Several children explained that they miss Greek food, and one mother misses eating fresh food from the farms. Sand (2008) argues that the lack of food products similar to those from the home country can be a challenge for immigrants, as it makes it difficult to cook the food they are used to.

When I asked the children what their favorite food was, many said spaghetti. Spaghetti is common to eat both in Greece and in Norway. Of the rest of the children, some mentioned typical Greek dishes, such as *moussaka*, *pastitsio* and *gyros*. One Greek child said she liked salmon with potatoes, which is typical Norwegian. Two Greek-Norwegian children said that their favorite food is taco, which is inspired from Mexican food, and one Greek child said sausages and pancakes. Taco, sausages and pancakes are all very common to eat in Norwegian homes. When growing up as part of a minority group, similarities with other people can lead to a feeling of sameness, such as similar food traditions among people from the same ethnic group (Giralt, 2011). As most of the families frequently eat Greek food, this might thus increase their feeling of sameness among each other, together with other traditions or similarities they share.

### 5.2.3 Celebrations and traditions from Greece

Greek and Norwegian celebrations and traditions are, according to the adult participants, quite different, as Greek people are in general more religious than Norwegian people are. Among the most important celebrations in Greece is the Easter celebration, as they are Christian Orthodox. Most of the families explained that the Easter celebration is important to them and that they celebrate Easter in a Greek way. They go to church for religious rituals, and several of them make barbequed lamb, as this is traditional for Greek Easter. The religious dimension of Easter is of much more importance in Greece than in Norway, and the celebrations are thus bigger in Greece. In Norway, Easter is also big, but it is more associated with holidays, skiing in the mountains and eating sweets. One mother explained that they celebrated Easter the first year they were in Norway. They have however stopped celebrating it as they are not very concerned with the religious

practices, and the family is vegetarian and does thus not eat lamb, which is a big part of the celebration.

Name days are important for several of the participants. To celebrate name days is very common in Greece, while in Norway we usually do not give much attention to it. The parents in two families mentioned that they celebrate the Greek national days. One of these explained that her son participates in the celebrations of the Greek national days 28<sup>th</sup> of October and 25<sup>th</sup> of March together with the children from the Greek classes. She claims that these celebrations do not have any importance for her, as she does not feel any national identity. However, she wants her son to participate to socialize with the other Greek children.

In Greek celebrations, children are, according to one parent, more involved than in Norwegian celebrations. The parent explained that everyone is invited “whether they are 4 or 86”. She believes that adults in Norway drink more alcohol and that children thus often are excluded from ‘adult parties’. She explained that in Greece the children are served the same food as the adults, even if it is a child’s birthday, and not just hotdogs and juice, which is very common in Norway. The way children and childhood is perceived varies from one society to another (James & James, 2012b). From this mother’s perspective, children in Greece are thus seen as part of the group in Greek celebrations, while children in Norway are facilitated for and perceived as a separate group from the adults when having a celebration.

One mother explained that Christmas is a bigger celebration in Norway than in Greece. For seven families Christmas is however an important celebration. For two of these families Christmas is important because it is a nice and fun celebration for the children. According to Christopoulou and de Leeuw (2008), it is common that families sometimes adjusts their cultural habits to make them relevant in the new context. Some families explained that they have adjusted their Christmas celebration after they migrated, as the Norwegian Christmas celebration adds something extra to their usual celebration. In Greece, according to one mother, Christmas is celebrated in church and afterwards the family gather to eat. In Norway, Christmas is mainly celebrated at home with the family, but some people also go to church in the morning before the celebration at home.

Even if the families continue to celebrate their Greek traditions in Norway, the celebrations are different as their family and friends that they used to celebrate with in Greece are not there. As the celebrations are adjusted to the new socio-cultural context and some families are adopting

Norwegian cultural values and ways of celebrating, the families cultural values thus change after migration (Sand, 2008). For three of the families, the Greek celebrations and traditions are not very important. One Greek-Norwegian family mainly celebrates Norwegian traditions and explained that the Greek culture is only represented through food and language. Two Greek families are, as mentioned before, more concerned about celebrating to have a nice time, rather than to follow the cultural or religious practices. One of these mothers seems like she was taking distance from the Greek culture, as she is not concerned about Greek celebrations and does not care about sustaining their family's cultural identity. It does however seem important for most of the Greek families to continue with the Greek celebrations and tradition after they arrived to Norway, and two of the three Greek-Norwegian families keep their Greek traditions as well. The mother in one of these families explained that they celebrate all the Norwegian and all the Greek celebrations to show their son that he is a bicultural child. They think it is fun to have so many celebrations, and the son is actively taking part in both preparations and celebrations. The mother explained that he is excited and counts the days for each celebration. The father in the other Greek-Norwegian family explained that as long as the children want to, they are celebrating all their cultural celebrations from both the mother's and the father's cultures.

#### 5.2.4 Visits to Greece and contact with relatives

It turned out that the children's ties to Greece are commonly sustained through visits to Greece and contact with relatives there. Similar patterns are reported in a study by Devine (2009) where immigrant children keep their ties to their country of origin most commonly through contact with relatives, and, for some, through travels 'home'. The children in all the families in this study travel to Greece at least once a year to see relatives and friends, but also to have holidays. In several families, children are traveling more frequent than their parents, but some children are only going to Greece during the summer holidays. When the children are traveling without their parents, they are staying with family or relatives during their visits. Two mothers are not very concerned about visiting Greece for their own sake. They are very dissatisfied about the socio-economic and political situation in the country, and seem like they do not like to spend their time there for this reason. However, the children in both of these families visit Greece several times a year to meet their family. As all the parents mentioned their family and relatives as the main reason for their travels, it seems like it is important for the parents that the children maintain their familial ties in Greece. Visits to the parents' home country can be a good way of sustaining the development of

children's mother tongue (Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007; Vinje, 2010). The children also get to experience more of the Greek culture through these visits, which can strengthen their belonging to Greece and their Greek identity.

The mother in one Greek-Norwegian family explained that her parents from Greece often visit for longer periods, living together with the family. The children thus get to practice more of the Greek language than usual, as the mother has explained that they usually speak Norwegian at home. The grandparents might as well give cultural influence on the children in other ways during their stays in Norway.

#### 5.2.5 Contact with other Greek people in Norway

Contact with people of the same origin when abroad can lead to a fellowship or a feeling of togetherness within the group, as they might share the same cultural values and have a sense of belonging to the same country (Hylland Eriksen, 2001; Sand, 2008). Several parents were talking about contact with other Greek people in Norway when they were asked about how the Greek culture is represented in their children's lives. Some of the parents, as mentioned, explained that one of the reasons for their children to take Greek lessons is to get to know other Greek children. The children in all the families seemed to have some friends that are either Greek or Greek-Norwegian. The parents in two families were not concerned about socializing with other Greek people in Norway or did not bother to intentionally seek contact with people from Greece. This was partly due to, as Sand (2008) also argues, that the people of the same origin that meet abroad, might not have anything in common, except from their culture, and would thus not necessarily have been interested in socializing with each other if they had met in their country of origin. These parents did however explain that they have a few good Greek friends in Norway. Other families were however actively taking part in the Greek community where they live and seemed more concerned about sustaining their children's Greek identity.

The children might, according to Giralt (2011), feel sameness with children from the same origin as they speak the same language(s), have the same food traditions, and due to the way they relate to each other. A group of people can develop a group identity based on their ethnic or religious belonging (Sand, 2008). After talking with the participants in the different cities I visited for my fieldwork, I could feel a different sense of group identity among the Greek community. In a place that have a more organized community, it seemed like the Greek or Greek-Norwegian children

socialize more with each other due to social events, while in a place with a less organized community, the children seemed to be less involved with each other. Sand (2008) argues that children's ability to develop a positive bicultural identity, depends on how well the children are able to be part of both cultures and feel a sense of belonging. The children do not necessary need to feel that they belong to both cultures as long as they feel that they belong to at least one of them where they also feel recognized and safe. If the children however are going to develop a sense of belonging to both cultures, it is advantageous if the children have the chance to build a social network with children of the same origin (Sand, 2008). By socializing with children of the same origin, or children that have the same experience of migration or a bicultural childhood, the children can get the chance to develop a sense of sameness with these children. To socialize with Norwegian children, is also important for the children to develop a sense of belonging to the society they live in. Kindergartens and schools are arenas where children easily can develop friendships both with ethnic Norwegian children, and with other ethnic minority children (Fandrem, 2011).

### 5.3 Biculturalism and identity

According to several of the adult participants, including one of the youths, the experience of different cultures can make children more open-minded and flexible, and give them a broader understanding of other cultures, which can lead children to easier accept differences among people. Some participants explained that it is important to have experiences from different cultures as the world is becoming more globalized. The children can thus have use for their bilingual skills and cultural flexibility. One parent argued that when the children are growing up, they can choose what they want to keep from each culture. Sand (2008) explains that identity is influenced by cultural expectations from the society. As there are different cultural expectations in Greece and in Norway, children are thus influenced by both, which in some cases can lead to a conflict between values. Immigrant parents' expectations might thus conflict with the expectations from the society. This is for example visible through children's wish for increased independence in Norway, while Greek parents, as explained by some participants, are more protective towards their children. When immigrant children meet new values and expectations in the new society, they might be stuck in a place between the two cultures trying to convert meanings, understand the differences and look for similarities between the cultures (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008, p. 240). The challenges of negotiating between different cultural values might lead the children to create a space in-between the two cultures where they develop their hybrid identity (Bhabha, 1994; Christopoulou & de

Leeuw, 2008). In a study by Devine (2009), immigrant children explained that they were feeling both at 'home' and 'different' in both the host country and their country of origin. This can be exemplified by the Greek youth who experienced Greece as a safe and known place, but at the same time, she felt different in Greece even before she migrated. She explained that she feels she fits better into the Norwegian society than the Greek, and that she does not identify herself as Greek. Even her grandmother and some of her friends told her that Norway suits her better than Greece, as she looks happier and calmer after she moved. The girl seemed to feel at home in Norway.

The teacher argued that if the children experience the migration and adaption in a good way, learn both languages and are able to feel at home in both countries, this can enrich their lives and they can develop a Greek-Norwegian identity, or become functionally bicultural (See e.g. Sand, 2008). If the children have problems with adapting and do not feel at home in Norway, the teacher believes that the children might experience a conflict within themselves where they feel that they do belong neither to Norway nor to Greece. She claims, as previously mentioned, that the older the children are when migrating, the more difficult they experience the adaption to the new country. The Greek-Norwegian children's identity and belonging to Greece and Norway depend on how well the Greek culture is represented and sustained in their everyday lives. Depending on the different children's experiences with and attachment to the two cultures, they will feel a different degree of ethnic identity (See e.g. Åkesson, 2007).

One mother explained that she does not have any national identity that connects her to Greece, even though she grew up in Greece. This might be due to her bicultural background. As mentioned before, it seemed like she was not very concerned about sustaining her son's Greek identity either. Her son however goes to Greek lessons and participates in the celebrations of the Greek national days together with other Greek and Greek-Norwegian children, and thus gets the chance to develop his Greek identity. By giving value and positive attention to children's bilingualism, they can get a better ground for developing a bicultural and intercultural identity and belonging (Øzerk, 2008). The mother further explained that a friend of her had asked the son where he was from, and the son responded that he was Norwegian. I tried to ask her son about whether he identified himself with the Greek culture, but as he was very young, and as identity is a quite abstract topic, I found it difficult to discuss the topic with him.

As the performance and perceptions of the Greek culture change and adjust to the culture of the new society when migrating (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008; Sand, 2008), children's cultural and ethnic identity also changes (Sand, 2008). Yet, the families continue to practice the Greek culture to different degrees. All the parents pass some parts of the Greek culture on to their children. Whether this cultural influence is transferred consciously or unconsciously, it gives their children the possibility to further develop their Greek identity. All the parents are also concerned about integrating and adapting to the new socio-cultural context so that their children can feel at home in Norway. The children might thus develop a positive Greek-Norwegian identity.





## 6 Conclusion

Migration is becoming more and more common, whether people are in search for work or education, migrate to get married, or are leaving an unfortunate situation in one's country of origin. As the world is becoming more globalized, many children experience a bicultural or multicultural childhood. The recent years, the immigration to Norway from southern Europe have increased a lot (Eurostat, 2014a; SSB, 2014b), and according to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Norway is an attractive destination for migrants, as the country offers safety, stability, welfare benefits and has a demand in the labor market (Utenriksdepartementet, 2007). As the Norwegian society is becoming more multicultural, the need for knowledge about bicultural and multicultural childhood is increasing (Fandrem, 2011). The aim of this thesis has been to learn more about Greek and Greek-Norwegian children's experiences of migration and bicultural childhood, how the Greek culture is sustained in their lives, and about how this is affecting their development of identity and belonging.

This thesis drew on empirical material from a multi-method study, including questionnaires for parents, worksheets, mind-mapping activities and semi-structured interviews with the children, and a semi-structured interview with a teacher. In the first meeting, I had a semi-structured interview with a child and a mother. Without any ice-breaker activity (Gibson, 2007), I found it difficult to build rapport with the child. The task-based methods were thus especially made to build rapport with the children, which is important to create trust between the participant and the researcher (Kellett & Ding, 2004). I experienced that it was much easier to build rapport through the workshop, than through a semi-structured interview. As children and parents can give different perspectives on the same topics, I considered it important to include the parents in the research. As well as giving me interesting and useful information for the research, the questionnaire was keeping the parents busy while I was talking with their children. The children could thus speak freely and independently without interruption from their parents.

### 6.1 The importance of including children in research

Within the social studies of childhood, children are seen as social actors (Prout & James, 1990b), and researchers are interested in studying children in their own right (Smith & Greene, 2014). As children are considered as 'beings' and childhood thus is seen as an integral part of the society (Qvortrup, 1987), researchers within the social studies of childhood are giving importance and value to children's perspectives (James & James, 2012c). The importance of including children's

perspectives was visible through this research, as children in some cases gave more in-depth answers than their parents, and the children and their parents also added different perspectives on the same questions. Childhood is seen as socially constructed, and shaped by the cultural context. The understanding of childhood is thus varying from one culture to another, and it is possible to talk about a diversity of childhoods (James & James, 2012b; Qvortrup, 1987).

## 6.2 Immigration and adaptation

As childhood differs between cultures and societies (James & James, 2012c), the experience of childhood thus changes through migration (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). Some of the children in this study have moved from one social reality to another, with a different culture and different norms and values, and they have thus encountered several challenges of adaptation and integration. When arriving to Norway, the Greek children and their families were experiencing several changes in their lives. The parents argued that they felt that Norway is a safer and more stable country to live in due to the financial and political circumstances in Greece, and more than half of the children seemed to have been concerned about their parents' economic hardships in prior to migration. The climate differences changed the reality of children's outdoor play, as there is little snow in Greece and as the children were spending more time in parks in Norway.

To adapt to foreign cultural norms or habits can sometimes be challenging. One child found it embarrassing that she was not used to the social norms in Norway. Some things that are seen as normal in one culture can be perceived as strange or inappropriate for outsiders, who are not familiar with it. One mother did for example not allow her child to sleep at a friend's place because she was "too young". In Norway, it is however common that children can sleep over at friend's house from when they are in late kindergarten or early school age. Another family had however adapted to this habit. Other things are however easier to adapt to. The families explained that they have adopted some Norwegian traditions, and all of them are for example celebrating the Norwegian national day.

When migrating the children and their families had to leave their social networks in Greece and start building new networks in Norway (See e.g. Sluzki, 1992). Some children found it challenging to find new friends, others found friends easily, and some children even had some friends or relatives in Norway before arrival. As the study revealed that it is common to migrate in sections, some of the participants even had close family members waiting for them to come to Norway.

When some parts of the family have migrated before, those that come after have the advantage that their family has already started to build a network. It can thus be easier for them to adapt, as to start building a network can be challenging (Sand, 2008).

Several of the Greek children were in receiving classes or receiving schools, while some children got adapted Norwegian lessons, mother tongue lessons or bilingual subject teaching. Some children were happy for these classes, as it helped them to learn Norwegian, and one of the fathers expressed gratefulness to the way immigrant children are integrated in school in Norway. As well as facilitating for Norwegian language learning, these classes help to sustain children's mother tongue, and the books they were using to learn Greek did also include cultural aspects.

Many of the participants were explaining how their increased feeling of safety in Norway had led the children to become more independent. The children seemed to like that they could play outdoor without the surveillance of adults and go to school by themselves. Several of the parents seemed to be happy that their children gradually gained more independence, but one mother explained that it was challenging for her as the way of raising children in Norway, conflicted with what she is used to from Greece. This mother did however respect her children's wish for increased independence and tried to adapt. The teacher explained that several parents seemed to find children's increasing independence challenging. Further, she argued that even if the parents let the children become more independent, this could lead to a conflict between norms and values within the children, as they both want to adapt, as well as they want to fulfil their parents' expectations.

### 6.3 The role of the Greek culture in children's lives

Children's associations with Greece were mostly related to summer holiday memories, family in Greece and Greek food. The children that had been living shortest in Norway associated Greece with familial memories, while the children that were born in Norway or had been living around two years in Norway, associated Greece with 'holiday memories'. It can thus seem like the longer the children live in Norway, the more they distance themselves from Greece. As the study was conducted just after the summer holiday, this might however have influenced the children's associations.

The Greek culture is represented, to greater or lesser extent, in the everyday lives of all the families. The culture seem to be mostly represented through the Greek language, Greek food, travels to Greece, contact with relatives in Greece, through contact with other Greek people in Norway, and

by continuing celebrating Greek traditions, such as the Easter celebration. When moving to a new country, the families' cultural traditions are often adjusted to the new cultural context, and the family might make their traditions more relevant to the new context (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). Many of the participants in this study had for example more or less adjusted their Christmas celebration to the way it is commonly celebrated in Norway, because this way of celebrating added something extra to their usual celebration.

Some of the parents were conscious about sustaining the Greek culture and pass it on to their children, while other were sustaining the Greek culture without thinking much about it. A few parents did however seem to either not care much about the Greek culture, or even take distance from it. All the parents were however concerned about their children learning the Greek language. Some of the children were fluent in both languages, while the others were fluent in one language and had different levels of proficiency in the other. For some parents it was obvious that their children were going to learn Greek as it is their mother tongue. A few parents wanted their children to participate in Greek lessons to get to know other Greek children, and one mother was concerned that her son should continue learning Greek so that he does not forget a language he already knows. According to the Greek teacher, the children seemed rather demotivated for having Greek lessons while living in Norway. This was also the case for one of the children I interviewed. Unfortunately, I did not get the other children's perspectives on participating in Greek lessons.

Travels to Greece and contact with relatives there turned out to be a common way to keep children's socio-cultural ties to Greece (See also Devine, 2009). All the children are traveling to Greece at least once a year to visit relatives and to have holidays, and many of them are traveling several times a year. Such travels can also contribute to children's language development (Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007; Vinje, 2010) and to their development of cultural identity and belonging to Greece.

Another way the children's socio-cultural ties and identity is sustained is through contact with other Greek or Greek-Norwegian people in Norway. Contact with people of the same origin when abroad can result in a feeling of togetherness and a group identity (Giralt, 2011; Hylland Eriksen, 2001; Sand, 2008). All the participants had some friends or relatives in Norway of either Greek or Greek-Norwegian decent. Among the participants in the study, it seemed like the contact with other Greek or Greek-Norwegian people depended on how organized the Greek community in the city was. In

a place where the Greek community was more organized, it seemed like the participants had more contact with other Greek and Greek-Norwegian people.

As children are meeting many challenges when migrating and growing up in-between cultures, it is important to give attention to the advantages and the empowering experiences these children have (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008). According to the participants, the experience of migration and biculturalism makes children more open-minded and flexible towards accepting differences among people. Children's bilingualism gives children more opportunities, as they can communicate with people in more countries. Bilingualism is also said to increase mental flexibility and the persons' ability to form concepts (Loona, 2001; Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007).

If children are given the opportunity to develop both their Greek and their Norwegian identity, they can develop a positive bicultural identity and a feeling of belonging to both countries (Sand, 2008). It can however be challenging to grow up 'in-between' two cultures, as norms and values can conflict (Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2008; Sand, 2008), as for instance some of the families' experiences in regards to their children's increased independence in Norway. When encountering conflicting values, the children can thus end up feeling both at 'home' and 'different' in both countries (Devine, 2009). It is therefore important to give positive attention to children's cultural background, so that the children can have a good base for developing their bicultural identity and belonging (Øzerk, 2008).

#### 6.4 Concluding remarks and further research

This research has increased our insight into bicultural children's lives, showing that migration can be experienced very differently depending on the circumstances and the family's flexibility to adapt. Bicultural childhood experiences are diverse. Like the term childhood, it has no single meaning. Depending on how the two cultures are practiced in their lives, children are experiencing biculturalism differently. Children do thus have different conditions for developing their bicultural identity.

During this research, many interesting aspects of childhood migration and bicultural childhood have emerged, such as children's experience of adapting to a new socio-cultural context, the transformation of childhood that happens through migration, language development among bilingual children, and the development of identity and belonging to the different countries and cultures. These topics would be interesting to explore further in a more longitudinal research.



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## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Information letter to parents

Appendix 2 – Request for participation in research project

Appendix 3 – Questionnaire to parents

Appendix 4 – Workshop with children



Appendix 1 – Information letter to parents

## **Greek (and Greek-Norwegian) children's experiences of living in Norway**

### *Background information:*

My name is Irene Midtskog Liland. I have a background in Pedagogics and I am currently studying a two years master program in MPhil Childhood Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. As part of my Master's Thesis I am going to conduct fieldwork during the summer of 2014. The fieldwork will take place sometime between June and September dependent on when the participants are able to participate.

### *Topic for my Master's Thesis:*

I am interested in the topic children, integration and identity, and I have a good relation with Greece and the Greek culture. Therefore, I have decided to write my Master's Thesis about Greek and Greek-Norwegian children's experience of living in Norway. I would like to find out more about how it is for children to grow up in Norway with two cultures and how these children experience their identity. If any of the children are born in Greece, and have migrated to Norway, I will also be interested in children's experiences of migration.

### *The importance of the topic and of children's perspectives:*

In the multicultural society today, it is important to have knowledge about integration and identity when working with children. The best way of learning about how children experience integration and develop their identity, is to ask children themselves. That is why I am interested in having your children as participants in my research.

### *Methods:*

I will be using child-friendly methods, which will make the research more fun and interesting for the children, than traditional methods. An example is to base an interview on children's own drawings of a topic to make the situation more natural and comfortable for the child.

### *Participation and confidentiality:*

Participation in the research is voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time. Both parents and children have to agree for the children's participation. The information I get from the children will be kept confidential and names will not be presented in my Master's Thesis.

### *Contact information:*

I am currently working on designing the research project, so small changes from the above description might take place. If you are interested in participating or want more information please contact me by e-mail: [irenemiland@gmail.com](mailto:irenemiland@gmail.com), mobile phone: 90 86 64 76, or Skype: irmili (or search for me by using my name or my e-mail).

*Best regards, Irene Midtskog Liland*





## **Request for participation in research project**

### ***“Biculturalism among Greek-Norwegian children in Norway. How do these children experience to live with two cultures, and how is the Greek culture represented in their lives?”***

**Name:** Irene Midtskog Liland

**Contact information:** 90866476 / [irenemliland@gmail.com](mailto:irenemliland@gmail.com)

**Study program:** Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies at Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

#### **Background and purpose**

In the multicultural society today, it is becoming increasingly more common to grow up with two or more cultures. To facilitate for children in school and kinder garden, it is important to have knowledge about children's experiences of growing up with these cultures. With this knowledge, teachers and others who associates with the child, can use children's cultural background as a resource when facilitating for the child to strengthen their feeling of identity and make them proud of their cultural background.

The aim of the project is to learn more about children's experiences of growing up with two or more cultures, and about how the Greek culture is represented in the child's life. I want to learn about what children think is positive about growing up with two cultures, and whether they meet any challenges. I want to talk with the children about how they identify themselves with Greek and Norwegian culture.

The study is a part of my Master's Thesis in MPhil Childhood Studies at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research at The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Persons requested to participate in the project have been selected because of their Greek, or Greek-Norwegian background. I have chosen these groups because of my interest in the Greek culture and the Greek language, and my interest in childhood in a multicultural perspective.

#### **What does the participation in the study imply?**

If you would like to participate in this study, I need you to set aside some time for this in August and/or September. The study will consist of a questionnaire for the parents and different work sheets for the children combined with interview or discussion (children and parents decide amongst them if the parents shall be present). It is optional if you want to participate in all activities.

If children and parents give their consent about it, I would like to use sound recorder. If sound recorder is not used, I will take notes during interviews and conversations.

Parents can on request get to see the interview guide. Information given by the children will be kept confidential – without parents' access, due to the researcher's duty of confidentiality.

### **What happens with the information about you?**

All personal information will be treated confidential. Only the student, which is conducting the study, will have access to personal information, sound recordings and other collected data. If some interviews are conducted in Greek, it might be necessary to involve an interpreter – in that case the participant will be informed. The sound recordings will be transcribed and de-identified soon after the interviews. The sound recordings will then be deleted. Personal information will be kept separately from other collected data, so that the participant cannot be identified.

Names and other information that can make other people identify the participant will not be presented in the publication.

The project is planned to end May 2015, but the data collection is planned to end in October 2014. Collected data will be deleted when the project has ended.

### **Voluntary participation**

Participation is voluntary, and the participant can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. If you withdraw from the study, all information about you will be deleted.

If you want to participate or have any questions to the study, contact Irene Midtskog Liland on phone: 90866476 or, e-mail: [irenemliland@gmail.com](mailto:irenemliland@gmail.com)

The study is reported to the Data Protection Official for research, Norwegian Science Data Service.

## **Confirmation to participate in the study**

I have received information about the study, and I am willing to participate together with my child(ren)

-----  
(Signed by participant (parent), date)

Each child will individually be asked if they want to participate in each activity after the parents have confirmed that they can participate. This confirmation will be given orally.

*The participants are free to decide to participate in some activities and not participate in other (ex. To fill in the questionnaire, but not participate in the workshop).*

- I agree to answer a questionnaire (for parents)*  
 *I agree that my child can participate in a workshop with different work sheet activities and discussion/interview*

-----  
(Signed by project manager, Irene Midtskog Liland, date)

Appendix 3 – Questionnaire to parents

**Questionnaire to parents**

Where do you come from and which languages do you speak (parents)?

How long have you lived in Norway? Where are your children born?

Why did you choose to live in Norway?

How often are you in Greece and what is the main purpose for the travel (holiday, family, other)?

How is the Greek culture represented in your children's lives?

Which languages do the children speak and how well do they speak these?

When did the children start to learn the different languages?

Which languages are used between parents and children in different settings?

Which languages are your children using between each other?

Which language do the parents use between each other?

Do the children sometimes mix Greek and Norwegian? Do you have any examples?

Do the children get Greek language lessons? (Why/why not? – When did they start, how often?)

Which holidays and celebrations are more important to you (Greek/Norwegian/other)?

How do these differ from Norwegian or Greek traditions?

To what degree do you as parents make conscious decisions about cultural influence when raising your children (Greek lessons, celebrations, participation in cultural events, other things)? Why do you make these decisions?

To what degree are the children participating in these decisions?

Do your family meet any challenges in relation to that you are a Greek/Greek-Norwegian family? (Language, culture, integration, inclusion, belonging, other things)? How?

How do you deal with these challenges?

Do you experience any advantages with that your children grow up between two cultures?

How is it to come from Greece and be parents in Norway? How is it to be parents from Greece and Norway and have children together? Do this give any challenges?

Other things or comments:



## Appendix 4 – Workshop with children

### **Worksheet**

What do you like to do in your leisure time?

What is your favorite food?

What do you like to watch in television or movies? Which language is it in?

In which language do you like to read? Why?

Where are you from?

### **Mind-mapping 1**

What do you associate with ‘Greece’ and ‘Greek’?

### **Mind-mapping 2**

How is it to be Greek or half Greek in Norway (positive/negative things, challenges)?

### **Semi-structured interview**

*For immigrant children (Greek)*

How do you think it is to live in Norway compared to Greece?

Why did you move to Norway?

What did you think when you got to know that you were going to move to Norway?

Can you tell about the beginning of your stay in Norway?

*For children born in Norway (Greek-Norwegian)*

How is it to have parents from two different countries?