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# Chinese migrant children and parents' experience of navigating everyday life and childhood ideals in Norway

Master's thesis in Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies

Supervisor: Linn C. Lorgen

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# Abstract

A considerable amount of research has argued that transnational migrant children encounter multiple challenges in adapting to their new environment, while fewer studies have examined children's own perspectives and their role in the transnational migration experience. This master thesis aims to explore the Chinese children's experiences of transnational migration from China to Norway. Specifically, the study seeks to explore children's experience of moving from China to Norway and their post-migration everyday lives in Norway. Moreover, this study gains insights into the idea of a 'good' child/childhood in Chinese and Norwegian contexts.

This is an in-depth study with five families, including five children and nine parents. This study used qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews and several task-based research activities, such as drawing, photographic voices, sentence completion, and neighborhood walks, in an attempt to gather information. The gathered materials were coded by using NVivo™ and analyzed by thematic analysis. Theoretical perspectives from the field of childhood studies have been used to frame this thesis, including an actor-oriented and a constructionist perspective.

In the first analysis chapter of this study, I focus on migrant children's experiences of migration and their daily life in Norway. The research findings indicate that children are not only care receivers in transnational family migration, but they are also caregivers, interpreters and language teachers for their parents. Secondly, migrant children play an important role in influencing their parents' new social network in Norway. Finally, the study also found that the reasons for the participants' feelings of exclusion were mainly from challenges as language, food and cultural identity. Finally, the study revealed the discursive agency of the participants, who adopted tactics to cope with the challenges during the adaptation process.

In the second analysis chapter of this study, I focus on contextualized understanding childhoods and reveal the tensions between discourses on Norwegian childhood and Chinese childhood through children and their parents' accounts and interpretations. I found the participants' parents sought to resolve such tensions by accepting the Norwegian childhood, reducing parental authority, and enrolling their children in extracurricular classes. The study also revealed children's discursive agency by positioning themselves and their parents in a Norwegian context, countering their parents' demands that they attend too many online tutoring classes on the grounds that 'good' parents in a Norwegian context should keep their children actively engaged in outdoor activities.

This study was conducted in hope of supplementing the growing body research in the field of childhood studies and transnational migration studies. Meanwhile, it hopes to shed more light on the experiences and everyday lives of children who have transnational migrated from China to Norway from their own knowledge.



# Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dear parents, Ying Xu and Bo Wang





# Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the following people:

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## List of Abbreviations (or Symbols)

OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
NTNU	The Norwegian University of Science and Technology
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
UDI	The Directorate of Immigration (Norway)
UNCRC	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
PRC	Peoples Republic of China
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
TCKs	The Third Cultural Kids
DAA	Discursive agency approach



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of this study

Transnational migration is increasing rapidly with the advent of globalization. According to the International Organization of Migration, the number of people migrating globally has comprised around 3.6 per cent of the global population in 2020 (McAuliffe & A, 2021). Nowadays, new communication and transport technologies have made it easier for contemporary migrants to stay in touch with their home countries and maintain the possibility of returning (Christopher Jenks, Bhatia, & Lou, 2013). Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1994, p. 60) conceptualize the transnational social field as “the domain created by the social relationships of persons who visit back and forth in their country of origin and persons who remain connected even if they themselves do not move” (Glick Schiller et al., 1994, p. 61). The broad context of this study is about people living in transnational social field and the social spaces created by their transnational social networks. The narrower background of this study is about the daily lives and social networks of Chinese migrants who have moved from China to Norway. I will focus on how the societies and cultures of the countries of origin and destination work together for the participants of this study and influence their social lives and their attitudes and plans for life.

During the literature review, I found limited literature focusing on the role of children in the construction of the transnational social field (e.g., Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001; White, Ní Laoire, Tyrrell, & Carpena-Méndez, 2011; Zeitlyn & Mand, 2012), and even limited understanding of children's transnational migration experiences and ideas from their own knowledge and perspectives, which has led to the persistent neglect of children's voices in the transnational migration field. In this sense, I determine to focus on understanding children's transnational migrant experiences and daily lives from their perspectives to make a contribution to filling this research gap. During my fieldwork in three cities of Norway, I found many Chinese migrant children moving from China to Norway due to their parent's labor, parents' remarriage, family reunification and education. They live in Norway with their parents while maintaining connections with families and friends in China. I found that they face challenges of language, food and a sense of belonging, and they navigated these challenges mostly by themselves; at the same time, they play an important role in helping their parents fit into the new community. My study provides insight about children's own ideas about transnational migration and their post-migration school and home life.

I anchor my work principally within the field of childhood studies (James & Prout, 2015), emphasizing children as social actors, or more appropriately, as Mayall (2002) put it as *social agents*, whose experiences and knowledge are worth studying in their own right. Furthermore, following the concept of childhood as socially constructed, I unpack the ideas of a 'good' child/childhood within the Norwegian and Chinese contexts from the perspectives of transnational Chinese migrant children and their parents. Childhood studies highlight that childhood is not 'universal', but varies understandings of childhood based on culture, society and history, thus context-based knowledge is of vital importance (James & Prout, 2015). Underneath the literal meaning of the 'good'



childhood, it shows the different social norms and values regarding childhood and parenting between China and Norway, which guides me to explore how Chinese migrants experience the differences and similarities between 'Norwegian childhood' and 'Chinese childhood'.

Overall, this study focuses on understanding Chinese migrant children and parents' experience of navigating everyday lives in Norway, as well as their perspectives on 'Norwegian childhood' and 'Chinese childhood'. With theoretical perspectives from the fields of childhood studies and transnational migration, I explore the different contextual understandings of childhood and child rearing between Norway and China. The data of this thesis comes from my fieldwork, carried out from 1st September to 1st November 2021, in Norway with five families, consisting of five children and nine parents. During this period, I have been to three cities in Norway to conduct the semi-structured interviews and task-based activities with participants. I hope this master thesis can offer a chance for people to understand Chinese migrant children and their migration and adaptation experience. I hope that interpreting the challenges encountered by migrant Chinese children will provide the government, school, family and society with the necessary knowledge to best support children who have migrated to Norway from China.

## 1.2 Issue statement

Immigrants moving from their original country to another country face multiple challenges. Their stresses can come from language barriers, loneliness, and loss of social status and identity in their early immigration stage (Xie, Xia, & Zhou, 2004). According to one report from Statistic Norway (2021a), compared to native people, people with an immigrant background (especially those from Asia, Africa etc.) in Norway are more likely to experience loneliness, low income, and reduced health. Immigrants in Norway can develop a sense of isolation due to poor Norwegian language skills, discrimination, and problems contacting their families (Statistic Norway, 2021a). The report further states that Norwegian-born children of immigrant parents experience more social exclusion than average. Language is one of the biggest obstacles for Chinese immigrants in Norway (Xue, 2014). Most immigrants need Norwegian language proficiency to get jobs in the Norwegian labor market; otherwise, it is less likely for them to find a good job (Hayfron, 2001). Most Norwegian schools use Bokmål Norwegian or Nynorsk Norwegian as the official teaching language (OECD, 2009). Immigrant children (with a minority language background) often face language barriers in their lives (Schleicher, 2015), which will result in many negative consequences. For instance, they cannot get an ideal academic performance at school and often experience loneliness and sadness (Schleicher, 2015). Participants in this research were born in China, and most had little knowledge of Norwegian before coming to Norway. Therefore, they are likely to face the problems such as language barriers, loneliness, poor academic performance. From aforementioned factors, children are likely to feel excluded in their early immigration stage.

Moreover, first-generation immigrant children often face more cultural identity challenges compared to second-generation immigrant children (Maehler, Daikeler, Ramos, Husson, & Nguyen, 2021). First-generation immigrant children have a weaker sense of identity with their country of residence, often feel foreign to their country of residence, and generate feelings of exclusion (Maehler et al., 2021). Besides, some first-generation Chinese immigrants who can speak Norwegian well would still not think they are integrated into the local society; rather, they believe they just found a comfortable way of life (Xue, 2014). On the one hand, the thinking and behavior patterns of first-

generation Chinese immigrants are strongly influenced by Chinese culture, and they feel more comfortable with the culture they are familiar with (Xue, 2014). On the other hand, China has undergone historic changes in the last 40 years. People from other countries than China who are unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese society might maintain some stereotypes against the Chinese as a group (Jacka, Kipnis, & Sargeson, 2013; Li, 2021), and this negative prejudice can affect the integration of the overseas Chinese into the new society (Xue, 2014). As a result, it can be hard for some Chinese migrants to get an authentic sense of belonging in a new community.

### 1.3 Definition of transnational migrant Chinese children in the study

In contrast to children born and raised in the country of destination, first-generation immigrant children need to go through a phase of transnational migration and adaptation, and they could have more connections to the culture of their origin country (see, Maehler et al., 2021; Tienda & Haskins, 2011; Zhou, 1997). Therefore, when it comes to the adaptation and identification of migrant children, it is necessary to distinguish these two groups. This study focuses on first-generation of immigrant children and refers to them as transnational migrant children. Based on the explanation of transnational migration by Glick Schiller et al. (1994, p. 60): "a process of movement and settlement across international borders in which individuals maintain or build multiple networks of connection to their country of origin while at the same time settling in a new country", I define the transnational migrant children in this study as children who experience the process of movement and settlement across international borders with/following their parents in which they maintain or build multiple networks of connection to China while at the same time settling in Norway.

### 1.4 Research aims and questions

This study aims to understand transnational migrant Chinese children's experience of moving from China to Norway and their post-migration everyday lives, as well as to gain insights into the idea of a 'good' child/childhood between Chinese and Norwegian contexts. Thus, the study will seek to:

- Explore transnational migrant Chinese children's experiences and feelings towards their transnational migration.
- Explore transnational migrant Chinese children's experiences and feelings towards their family life and school life in Norway.
- Explore transnational migrant Chinese children and their parents' understandings of the idea of a "good" child/childhood in Chinese and Norwegian contexts.

The following research questions have been constructed in order to approach the research aims:

- How do transnational migrant Chinese children view their transnational migration experience?
- How do transnational migrant Chinese children experience their relationship with parents, peers, teachers and relatives?
- How do transnational migrant Chinese children and their parents view Chinese childhood and Norwegian childhood, as well as how do the participants navigate these different childhood ideals?

## 1.5 Theoretical perspectives and methodology

The theoretical perspectives and methodology of this study are the theory and knowledge within the field of childhood studies (James & Prout, 2015) and the field of transnational migration. Childhood studies is an interdisciplinary field that incorporates many perspectives from other field (Alanen, 2012). This study chooses the (child)actor-oriented perspective and the social constructionist perspective to frame the analysis of this research. In this first analysis chapter, the actor-oriented perspective is used to frame how children view their migration and adaptation process and how children navigate their everyday lives. In the second analysis chapter, the constructionist perspective provides an angle to view the construction of transnational Chinese migrant children and their childhood, as well as trying to find the differences and potential tensions of discourses on 'Norwegian childhood' and 'Chinese childhood'. Most importantly, these two perspectives collaborate with each other avoiding the study being too agent-focused (actor-oriented perspective) or structure-focused (Foucauldian constructionist). In addition, Chapter three will present my selection of analytical concepts (i.e., agency, discourses, acculturation, belonging and cultural identity) from the actor-oriented perspective, the social constructivist perspective, and the field of transnational migration that I believe are useful in interpreting the evidence in this study. The more critical, context-based and relational understanding of agency will also be explained in detail in this chapter.

The methodology of this study is based on the theory within childhood studies in order to meet the research aims. This study aims to understand transnational migrant children's experience of family migration, and adaptation process in their post-migration everyday lives, which requires researcher have a close understanding of participants' experience and voices. In this sense, I design the research method from qualitative methodology. In-depth interviews, observation and task-based activities were used to collect data on migrant children's experiences, everyday lives and their perspectives on family migration. Besides, as important stakeholders of children's everyday lives, parents are involved in almost every aspect of the child's migration and adaptation process and know the child well. Thus, parents' perspectives are a valuable addition that are also included in the discussion.

## 1.6 Outline of the thesis

This thesis includes seven chapters. Chapter one provides a brief introduction to the study, including the background of the study, problem statement, definition of research subjects, research aims and questions, and the theoretical perspectives and methodology of this study.

Chapter two gives an overview of the background context that is relevant to this study. First, it gives a brief introduction to Norway, including information on immigration to Norway and information about Chinese community in Norway, as well as childhood in a Norwegian context. Second, it presents a brief introduction to China, including the country, and Chinese childhood with focuses on economic-political policies, education and intergenerational relations.

Chapter three elaborates the theories that support this study. The research field of Childhood studies (James & Prout, 2015) is essential in paving the orientation of this research which gives insights into two important theoretical perspectives of this thesis. The actor-oriented perspective guided me to explore the everyday lives of research

subjects and the constructionist perspective guided me to explore different understandings of childhoods. At the same time, main theoretical concepts of these two perspectives are elaborated, which are primarily agency, being, becoming and have been, children's voices, discourse and discursive agency. Following that, a literature review on transnational migrant children and the chosen analytical concepts are illustrated.

Chapter four provides information about the methodology and fieldwork settings of this study. First, it presents methodological perspectives that underpin the research design, which are childhood studies, qualitative methodologies, reflexivity and the researcher's role. Second, it presents the research process, research methods, and personal reflections on the challenges and difficulties that the author faced during the fieldwork. Following that, it explains the transcription process and the methods for coding data. In the end, the relevant ethical considerations of this study are explained.

Chapter five is the first analysis chapter of this study, which emphasizes the participants' experience of transnational migration and their post-migration family, school and social life in Norway. The actor-oriented perspective is implemented in this chapter. This chapter reveals the issues regarding migrant children's integration, a sense of belonging, and cultural identity. This chapter ends by explaining some tactics used by children in order to gain a sense of belonging.

Chapter six is the second analysis chapter of this study, which illustrates the participants' understanding of a "good" child/childhood in Chinese and Norwegian contexts. Following that, it discusses and compares the social norms and values of childhood in Chinese and Norwegian contexts. Finally, it discusses how subjects perceive the differences or similarities between Chinese and Norwegian social norms. Different cultures have different interpretations about 'good' childhood, and there is no right or wrong. This study is dedicated to a better understanding of different cultures and the reasons for the formation of social norms about 'good' children and 'good' parenting.

Chapter seven presents a conclusion to this thesis as well as some suggestions for future research and a presentation of this research limitation.

# 2 Research background

This chapter aims to demonstrate the background that relates to the study. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part begins with a basic introduction to Norway, which is the destination country for the participants. I provide an overview of the contemporary migration situation in Norway and information of Chinese in Norway. Following that, I provide information on childhood in the Norwegian context, addressing the experience of migrant children. The second part of this chapter is about the background of China, which is the participants' country of origin. It also provides insights into contemporary urban Chinese childhood with supplemented data and reports on economic-social policy, living condition, education, and intergenerational relations.

## 2.1 Country profile - Norway

Norway, officially known as the Kingdom of Norway, is a Nordic country bordering Sweden, Finland and Russia, with a total area of 385,207 square kilometers and a population of approximately 5.39 million in 2020 (Statista, 2020a). Norway is geographically close to the Arctic and is renowned for its natural beauty and unique natural phenomena (OECD, 2020). With the steadily growing market economy, low unemployment rate, world's highest life expectancies and lowest crime rates, Norway has ranked number one in the OECD Good Life Index in 2020 (OECD, 2020). It is worth mentioning that the petroleum industry is the backbone of Norway's industry. In 2020, Norway's gross domestic product (GDP) was 362.52 billion (13th in the world) and the petroleum industry accounted for approximately 16% of the country's GDP (Modig, 2020).

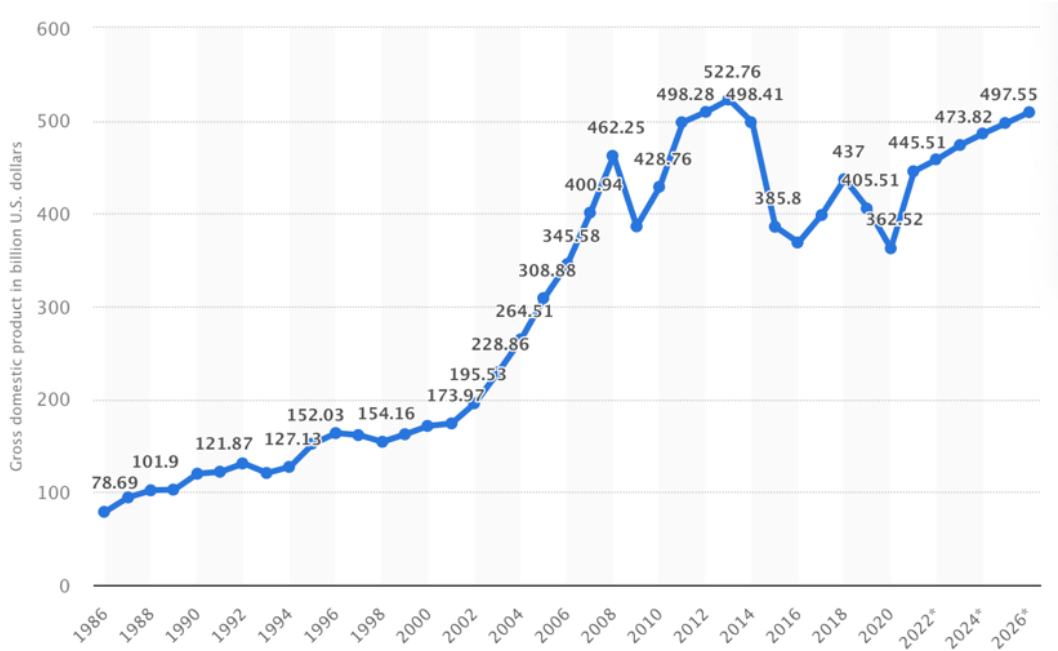


Figure 1: GDP per capita 1978-2018, Norway Source: Statista, 2020

Figure 1 shows the rapid growth of the Norwegian economy, with GDP peaking in 2014. Petroleum was first discovered in the North Sea region of Norway in the 1960s (Norwegian Petroleum, 2021). Since then, the high petroleum revenues have greatly contributed to the economy's boost and the construction of a strong welfare system in Norway. Most revenues are reinvested through the Pension Fund, making Norway one of the highest-income countries in the world (Statista, 2020a). At the same time, the petroleum industry's jobs have attracted many foreign workers (Bratsberg, Raaum, & Røgeberg, 2017). In 2012, the foreign workforce accounted for around 20% of the total workforce in the Norwegian petroleum industry and had continued to increase year by year (Bratsberg et al., 2017, pp. 10-11). However, the recent recession in the petroleum industry has led to an increase in the unemployment rate (Statista, 2020a). Reflections and arguments on environmental issues have also led Norwegian authorities to take measures to phase out oil production in the future.

### 2.1.1 The situation of immigration in Norway

Norway does not have a very long history of immigration; however, it is clear from the number of immigrants in recent years that immigrants have become an important part of the country's total population (Horst, Carling, & Ezzati, 2010). There were 800,094 immigrants and Norwegian born to immigrant parents, constituting 18.5 per cent of the total population (Statistic Norway, 2021d). Labor is the most important reason of immigrants migrating to Norway (Statistic Norway, 2021d).

The history of contemporary migration in Norway can be divided into three waves (Horst et al., 2010, pp. 6-7). The first wave of immigration is from the end of the 1960s to 1972, when the first labor migrants from third countries arrived in Norway (Horst et al., 2010). During this period, Norway's immigration policy was very liberal in order to attract more labor migrants to the country. The second wave began in 1972 when immigration policies began to become strict in order to address the 'problems' posed by the increasing immigrant population from Asia and Africa. (Horst et al., 2010, p. 7). The third wave is from the 1980s onwards when the main migration came from asylum seekers and reached its peak in 1987 (Horst et al., 2010). Afterwards, the Norwegian authorities implemented several measures and policies to regulate the number of immigrants and refugees. According to the Directorate of Immigration (UDI), anyone who wants to live or work in Norway should apply for permanent residency. To obtain permanent residence in Norway, an immigrant needs to meet the requirements of the Immigration Service: 1. Proof of 200 or 600 hours of study in Norwegian language courses is required; 2. Stay in Norway for at least three years, maintaining the main conditions of a temporary visa (work, marriage, etc.); 3. Have not committed a serious crime; recent applicants also need to pass the A1 level Norwegian speaking test and the social research test (UDI, 2021). Thus, compared to the initial immigration regulations and policies, the current regulation and laws on immigration are stricter.

According to Statistics Norway (2021e), 80% of people agree that most immigrants make an important contribution to Norwegian working life. However, there is a debate about cultural conflict and opposition to a multicultural society in Norwegian society, with relatively long historical roots. The current terrorist attack of July 22, 2011, caused by right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik, revealed opposing attitudes towards immigrants. This tragedy has led Norwegian society to think once again about the potential culture clash between Norwegian and immigrants from other cultural backgrounds (Eriksen, 2013, pp. 342-343).

### 2.1.2 Chinese in Norway

According to Statistic Norway (2021d), the total number of overseas Chinese<sup>1</sup> in Norway and the second generation of Chinese have reached 10518 in 2021, accounting for about 0.19% of the total population of Norway. The number of Chinese immigrants to Norway has maintained a stable growth since 1970 (Statistic Norway, 2021d). Most of the early Chinese immigrants were employed by Norwegian shipping business and came from mainland China or Hong Kong to work as cook and handyman on board. Some chose to make a living in Norway by opening restaurants later in life. After that, the number of Chinese coming to Norway for various reasons started to grow, such as work, study, and family reunification (Xue, 2014). In Norway, there are more women than men who are originally from (Xue, 2014). Xue (2014) suggests that a possible reason is that more Chinese females immigrated to Norway through marriage. The second reason is that Norwegians have adopted more Chinese girls than boys over the same period.

## 2.2 Childhoods in the Norwegian context

Historically, influenced by the idea of 'children's own culture' since the 1990s, Norwegian society emphasizes children's free play and peer interaction initiated by children themselves (Kjørholt, 2008, p. 22). According to R. D. Nilsen (2008) and Gullestad (1997), the outdoor environment and nature are important parts of Norwegian cultural life and are often seen as important places where children can engage in self-managed play and realize the Norwegian 'good' childhood. Thus, children's activities with outdoor interaction and contact with nature are strongly promoted.

Norway ratified the UNCRC in 1991 and it was incorporated into Norwegian law in 2003 (Kjørholt, 2008). What it means to be a child in contemporary Norwegian society has been shaped by the policy and the UNCRC (Kjørholt, 2008, p. 15). The rights of children endowed by the UNCRC can be divided into three main categories: provision, protection and participation (Montgomery, Burr, & Woodhead, 2003). The implementation of participation rights for children has become a principle of the notion of what it means to be a child and notions of (a good) childhood in Norway (Kjørholt & Seland, 2012). The participation rights of children are reflected in the Norwegian kindergarten, where children have the right to decide whom they want to play with and where they want to play, and where the society and the school give children enough opportunities to make such choices, namely 'freedom of choice' (Kjørholt & Seland, 2012).

Moreover, there is a growing discussion of the relationship and relative weight of these different rights within UNCRC. A considerable body of literature suggest that 'the best interests of children' might be in conflict with other rights within the UNCRC (e.g., Abebe & Tefera, 2014; Boyden, 1997; Kjørholt, 2008). For example, it has been argued that the reference to children's right to participation in the UNCRC brings enormous social responsibilities and pressures on children, thus conflicting with 'the best interests of' children (Kjørholt, 2008). Kjørholt (2008) finds that the right to participation of children is considered to be in conflict with the best rights of migrant and refugee children in Norway. This is because the right to participation often takes time and communication to realize. But for children newly arrived in Norway, who are likely to be in the process of seeking shelter and adapting to local life and language, the right to participation does not seem to be a priority in their current lives. Thus, although at a legal level, immigrant and

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<sup>1</sup> Overseas Chinese in this article refers to those with the ancestral Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

asylum-seeking children in Norway enjoy the same rights and benefits as native children in Norway, an overemphasis on the right to participation may result in their other rights not being given the attention they deserve.

The natural environment is an important part of Norwegian cultural life and, to a certain extent, has shaped the notions of a 'good' child rearing. Some migrant parents express that they feel the notions of good parents in Norway are embedded in the sentence of 'the more you go to the mountain, the better parents you are' (Herrero-Arias, Lee, & Hollekim, 2020). In their study, Herrero-Arias et al. (2020) illustrate a similar point, in which migrant parents think that a good parent is meant to be in Norway is about always encouraging their children to be active in nature and outdoor life. Children's and their parents' perspectives on Norwegian childhood and how it affects them will be presented in this study.

### 2.2.1 The educational setting in Norway

The educational system in Norway includes five stages: kindergarten (0-5), elementary school (6-13), lower secondary school (13-16) and upper secondary school (16-19), tertiary vocational education and higher education, in which elementary school and lower secondary levels are compulsory. Norwegian education has a strong focus on the development of children's humanistic, natural and cultural knowledge. According to Royal Decree on 1 September 2017 and section 1-5 of the Education Act, the values for primary and secondary education of core curriculum include six aspects. These effects are human dignity; identity and cultural diversity; critical thinking and ethical awareness; the joy of creating; engagement and the urge to explore; respect for nature and environmental awareness; democracy and participation.

Norway has a strong focus on equity in education. In order to guarantee immigrant children with access to education, the Norwegian government offers special language training for immigrant children whose mother tongue is not Norwegian. Municipality in Norway provide newly arrived pupils (with minority language backgrounds) with 'a reception group' at a school for a maximum of two years (Trondheim Kommune, 2021). In the reception group, the newly arrived students (with minority language backgrounds) will have bilingual vocational training, and the bilingual teacher who can speak the mother tongue of the students will help them learn Norwegian and school subjects (Trondheim Kommune, 2021).

Table 1 provides information about the minimum hour distribution of different subjects during the compulsory education period in Norway. It indicates that pupils spend most time on learning Norwegian in primary school, followed by Mathematics, physical education and art and crafts. When children go to lower secondary school, the time they spend on each subject will be relatively reduced, in which the most reduced is Norwegian language, followed by mathematics and art and crafts. Moreover, there are three new courses for students: Second foreign language, class and pupils' council activities, and programming. Norwegian children spend a considerable time on the religious education<sup>2</sup>. At the beginning, the implementation of religious education at school was used to help parents have their children baptized and give them a Christian upbringing (Hagesæther & Sandsmark, 2006, p. 277). However, from 1969 to the present, Norwegian society has experienced the increase in multiculturalism and diversity. In this sense, many people

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<sup>2</sup> The subject of religious education in primary and secondary school in Norway called Christianity, Religion and Ethics (KRLE).



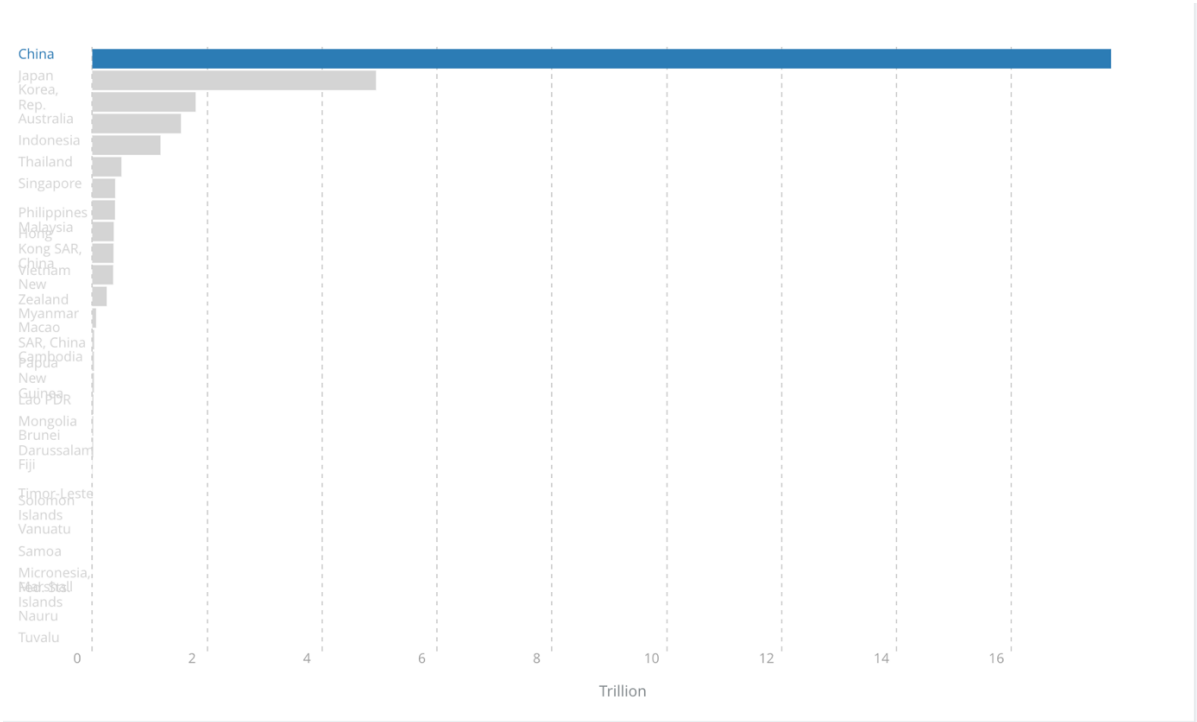
have criticized that the emphasis on Christian education in Norwegian education has potentially violated the human rights of other people with different religions or beliefs (Hagesæther & Sandsmark, 2006). Norwegian authorities have made changes and improvements in religious education based on these critiques. The current religious education in Norway is not just limited to Christianity, but also includes Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Philosophies of life. It aims to help the pupil to understand their existence and gain an understanding of different cultures. However, the current Education Act still states that "It shall also teach the significance of Christianity as cultural heritage in our society. For this reason, about half of the teaching time of the subject will be used for Knowledge of Christianity" (utdanningsdirektoratet, 2021). Thus, the majority part of the subject is about Christianity, which might be a challenge for immigrant families who belong to other religious groups.

Subject	Total number of hours in each stage	
	Primary (Grades I-VII)	Lower secondary (Grades VII-X)
<b>Knowledge of Christianity, religion and ethics</b>	427	157
<b>Norwegian language</b>	1296	398
<b>Mathematics</b>	812	313
<b>Social studies and history</b>	385	256
<b>Art and crafts</b>	477	150
<b>Science and environment</b>	328	256
<b>English</b>	328	227
<b>Second foreign language</b>	-	227
<b>Music</b>	285	85
<b>Home economics</b>	114	85
<b>Physical education</b>	478	228
<b>Class and pupils' council activities</b>	-	71
<b>Programme subjects</b>	-	113
<b>Total number of hours (minimum)</b>	4930	2566

**Table 1: Distribution by subject of the total minimum number of hours in each stage of the ten-year program Source: Eurybase (2006)**

### 2.3 Country profile - China

China, officially known as the People’s Republic of China (PRC), is a country in East Asia. It is the world’s most populous country, with a population of around 1.4 billion in 2021 (statista, 2020b). Covering approximately 9.6 million square kilometers, China is the third-largest country in the world (statista, 2020b). Since Deng Xiaoping became the leader in 1978 and implemented the Reform and Opening-up Policy. China's economy has shifted from a planned economy to a market-oriented economy, with significant foreign trades and investments with developed countries (statista, 2020b). China had significant economic growth, which reflects its GDP. China is the world's second-largest economy by nominal GDP since 2010 (statista, 2020b). Figure 2 shows that China’s GDP in 2021, which is significantly higher than other countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia.



**Figure 2: GDP of China and other countries from the same region, source: World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.**

Along with economic development, the material and cultural conditions of people have improved. Meanwhile, the gap between the rich and the poor in China has increased too (Fan, Kanbur, & Zhang, 2011). With business-friendly policies and geographical advantage, the coastal region of China has received more Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and much better infrastructure than the inland region of China (O'Brien & Leichenko, 2000, p. 230). Since more job opportunities in these areas, a large number of people moved from rural areas to coastal cities to work (O'Brien & Leichenko, 2000). The unbalanced regional development has caused huge differences in childhood between rural areas and urban areas, west to east, in China (Naftali, 2016). Meanwhile, the compulsory Household Registration System in China has made a clear distinction between rural and urban populations (X. Wu & Treiman, 2004). The existing household registration system, which has been modified from the previous one, allows the rural population to work temporarily in the cities, but they still need to pay an annual 'urban maintenance fee' to the city government (X. Wu & Treiman, 2004). Similarly, rural children need pay 'urban

maintenance fees' if they move to urban areas with their parents. Although rural people can become permanent residents of the city, for example, by buying a house, the high price of housing and the cost of living in the city discourage them to a large extent. Thus, the parents of rural families usually choose to work in urban areas alone, which has resulted in a large number of left-behind children and elders in rural areas in China (X. Wu & Treiman, 2004). In addition, rural children who follow their parents into the city must pay additional fees to attend urban primary schools, and their adaptation situation has also attracted attention in recent years (X. Wu & Treiman, 2004). Therefore, it is essential to distinct from the urban childhood and rural childhood in China. The problem of uneven development is pointed out here because of the need to mention the geographical background of the participants. According to the empirical data, all participants are from developed cities in China, which are Beijing, Hangzhou, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. These cities are all urban populous cities with high-quality living standard and advanced resources in education, health and human service. Therefore, the rest of the narrative will also focus only on the Chinese urban childhood context.

## 2.4 Childhoods in the contemporary urban Chinese context: A transforming childhood

Chinese society has undergone a great transformation in recent decades, and contemporary childhood in China is in the midst of such a transition. The rapid development of the Chinese economy has led to a great material improvement. Compared to previous generations, children in urban areas in China nowadays have a more affluent and carefree childhood (W.-W. Zhang, 2000). One Chinese policy needs to be addressed here is the Family Planning Policy, also known as the 'One-child' Policy. The family planning policy was introduced in 1970 and its main elements are: promoting late marriage and childbirth; fewer better births; and one child per couple (Fong, 2002). The one-child policy was implemented from 1979 to 2015. Later on, the two-child policy was introduced from 2015 to 2021, and the three-child policy after May 2021 to encourage citizens to have more children in order to cope with the ageing population (Tatum, 2021).

During the period of the one-child policy, this generation of children often received greater parental and grandparental investment and more available resources than the previous generations (Fong, 2002). Contemporary children are seen as the most valuable in a family. Providing children with everything they need is a part of a parent's preparation for their future. In contemporary Chinese families, parents are seen as having a duty to protect their children from all dangers, including those that may exist in the future (Fong, 2002). This generation of children is also often referred to as the "greenhouse flower" and "little emperor" (Xu, 2017; Y. Zhang, Kohnstamm, Cheung, & Lau, 2001). The term 'greenhouse flower' is used to describe children under the one-child policy who cannot withstand the slightest setback or blow under the careful protection of their parents, while 'little emperor' is used to describe the cosseted personality they develop in this environment. The situation of the "little emperor" has received the attention of the whole society, and action has been taken to curb the negative effects it can have (Xu, 2017, p. 154). Under this situation, frustration education is strongly promoted as an important part of the education of Chinese children (Lyså, 2021). In her understanding, Lyså (2018, p. 16) refers frustration education as "an educational practice aiming to create balanced individuals who could cope with current and future challenges." Briefly, the aim of frustration education is that parents and society want

children to be able to deal with problems mentally and competently when they are actually faced with them (Lyså, 2021, p. 131).

Meanwhile, the notion of 'good' children transformed in contemporary urban China. In the early 1990s, based on questionnaires and interviews with parents in Shanghai and two surrounding villages, the anthropologists Tobin, Wu, and Davidson (1991, p. 131) argued that Chinese parenting was authoritarian, emphasizing children's obedience to old families. In Xu's study, she conducted a year-long ethnography in middle-class private kindergartens in Shanghai and found that the norms of being a good child in contemporary China are changing and have multiple meanings (Xu, 2017). She argued the meaning of 'good' children is very complex, and some contemporary Chinese parents think that being obedient is less important than being sociable, caring and independent in today's Chinese society (Xu, 2017, p. 156). In Xu's research, she found that middle-class Chinese parents are now increasingly critical and self-reflective about their practices of parental authority (Xu, 2017, p. 192). Contemporary Chinese parents negotiate different values based on their own perceptions of the past and present and their understanding of Chinese and Western ways of child rearing, and Xu argues that this negotiation is a response to an increasingly competitive and stressful society (p. 192).

#### 2.4.1 Chinese education system

In China, education is often viewed as a national development strategy, and "the state guarantees the development of education as a priority" (Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 2021, Article 4:1). Education in China is compulsory for nine years, with six years of primary school and three years of secondary school. Chinese government emphasizes the right and duty of education for all citizens. The Education Law of the People's Republic of China also emphasizes that every "citizen of the People's Republic of China has the right and duty to be educated" (Article 9). Schools and teachers should "undertake the mission of teaching and educating people, cultivating builders and successors of the socialist cause, and improving the quality of the nation. Teachers should be loyal to the education of the people" (Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China, 1993).

The Chinese government has implemented education reform since 1999, and the essence of Education Reform is to overcome examination-oriented school practices to build quality-oriented education (Cui & Zhu, 2014). It aims to transform students from passive receivers of knowledge to active learners with an emphasis on developing well-rounded individuals rather than only memorization and examination scores (Cui & Zhu, 2014; Dello-Iacovo, 2009). However, despite the quality-oriented education is widespread and accepted by some schools and parents, the examination is still dominating the Chinese schooling, and the examination-led competition is still intensive (Dello-Iacovo, 2009, p. 248). In this sense, academic subjects such as Chinese, mathematics and science, which are within the college entrance examination, often receive more attention than other subjects such as arts and physical education (Dello-Iacovo, 2009, p. 246). Moreover, China has a strong emphasis on science and technology as it is another national development strategy (National assembly of the PRC, 2006). This leads to a phenomenon that schools value more science-related subjects than humanities-related subjects.

Chinese children have a heavy burden of study. The pressure on Chinese children usually comes from the competitive environment. Although there has been a significant change in ways of thinking about children's education, "societal demands and expectations" of students excelling in school have led to an environment dominated by strong competition

(Lyså, 2018, p. 21). Children are often expected to achieve high scores in the National College Entrance Exam (*Gaokao*<sup>3</sup>), so that they can go to a distinguished university such as the university in the project of '211' or '985'<sup>4</sup> (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2015). Meanwhile, there is also evidence that many young Chinese feel a heavy burden and a huge sense of responsibility towards their parents, understanding that their success will have a crucial impact on their families (Hwang, 2012). Thus, study becomes a heavy duty for Chinese children.

Moreover, as mentioned above, China's development is uneven between rural and urban regions. This results from the large difference in resource and quality of education between urban and rural areas in China. Children in urban areas of China have better educational resources such as highly qualified teachers, more education materials and more opportunities to study art and music. As a result, it is difficult for rural children to get rid of the cycle of poverty, and the gap between rich and poor in China is increasing.

#### 2.4.2 Chinese intergenerational relations

In the tradition of Chinese culture, a saying is often used to present the hierarchical order - let the king be a king, the minister (be) a minister, the father (be) a father and the son (be) a son (*Junjun, Chenchen, Fufu, Zizi*<sup>5</sup>) (Zhongling, 2014). This means people should have a clear understanding of their position and their mission. It also indicates a clear line and order between different generations. The concept of seniority in the family or clan (*Beifen*<sup>6</sup>) has also been rooted in the Chinese parent-children relationship. The ideal model between parents and children is often described as a 'benevolent father, filial son' (*Fucizixiao*<sup>7</sup>), which means that the father is responsible for bringing up his children in the right way and that the children should take care of their elderly parents when they grow up (Hwang, 2012). However, intergenerational relations are also in transformation. As mentioned above, many urban children are more likely to be spoiled by indulgent parents and grandparents due to the rise in economic and material standards and the implementation of one-child policy. These concerns are reflected in the "4-2-1 syndrome"- four doting grandparents, two spoiling parents, all investing their hopes and ambitions in a new generation of children (J. Zhu & Wang, 2005, p. 70). Many doting grandparents satisfy everything their grandchildren want and often even more than they can afford, while not minding that their grandchildren dictate to them. The increased power of children and the weakening of the authority of elders in the family can be linked to the one-child policy and the fact that parents and grandparents have fewer children to

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<sup>3</sup> 高考, the National College Entrance Examination in China, is a standardized college entrance exam held annually in mainland China.

<sup>4</sup> Project 211 and Project 985 are two projects on Chinese higher education, aiming at strengthening some good institutions of higher education and key disciplinary areas as a national priority. In China, 211 and 985 universities are very famous, which can be said to be the top universities in China. If you can enter 211 and 985 universities, you already have the ticket for a bright future.  
[http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/xw\\_zt/moe\\_357/jyzt\\_2015nztzl/2015\\_zt15/15zt15\\_mtbd/201511/t20151106\\_217950.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_zt/moe_357/jyzt_2015nztzl/2015_zt15/15zt15_mtbd/201511/t20151106_217950.html)

<sup>5</sup> 君君臣臣，父父子子, from the Analects of Confucius Yan Yuan, which is Confucius' advice to the ruler in governing the country

<sup>6</sup> 辈分, a Chinese word, refers to the lineage order among family, relatives and friends. It is mainly divided into elders (senior grandparents, great grandparents, grandparents, parents, etc.), juniors and seniors.

<sup>7</sup> 父慈子孝, a Chinese idiom, means that parents are kind to their children, while children are filial to their parents.

care for (Chee, 2000). In this sense, the traditional understanding of intergenerational relationships has changed in contemporary China.

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter has presented background information on the participant's country of origin and destination. It introduces the country profile of Norway and China, as well as childhoods in the Norwegian and Chinese contexts. A contemporary Norwegian childhood that promotes autonomy, freedom, free play and a love of nature has evolved in response to the discourse on children's rights and Norwegian geographical and cultural factors. China is in the process of rapid development and transformation, and Chinese urban childhood is different from that of its previous generations. China's economic development, political policies, educational environment, and the traditional ideas of Chinese culture are important factors that influence the structure of contemporary childhood in China. This background chapter is important for this research as it shed light on the relevant information of participants and their life in both Norway and China. In the next chapter, I will present the theoretical perspectives and the chosen analysis tools of this thesis.

## 3 Theoretical framework and literature review

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and the principles and rules by which researcher decides whether and how social phenomena can be known (Mason, 2017, p. 16).

Different theoretical perspectives provide different angles to view social phenomena (Mason, 2017). In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical perspectives and the chosen analytical concepts of this thesis. Overall, this study is rooted in the field of childhood studies (Prout & James, 2015), and within the field, there are different epistemological positions and theoretical perspectives (Alanen, 2012). I take advantage of an actor-oriented perspective and a constructionist perspective as the theoretical foundation of this study. The former presents children as social actors in navigating their everyday lives, and the latter starts the diversity of childhoods within the transnational contexts (Jenks, 1982; Prout & James, 2015). These two theoretical perspectives set the path to analyzing upcoming analysis chapters.

Overall, this chapter is constituted of three sections. First, I introduce the field of childhood studies with its emergence and key features, as well as some recommended theoretical perspectives within it. Second, I present the main theoretical perspectives of this research, which include an actor-oriented perspective and a constructionist perspective. I explain how they complement each other to be the co-theoretical perspective of this thesis. Following each theoretical perspective are their core concepts such as agency, children as beings, becomings and have beens (Cross, 2011; Uprichard, 2008), and children's voices. Discourses (Foucault, 1972) and discursive agency (Chris Jenks, 2004; Leipold & Winkel, 2017) are central concepts within the constructionist perspective. In the last section, I present a literature review of transnational migrant Chinese children, as well as helpful analytical concepts from previous literature on the topic, such as the concept of transnational migration, belonging and cultural identity, obedience and discipline, and interdependence.

### 3.1 Childhood studies

There are many approaches to theorizing children. Childhood studies is a field that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s (Jenks, 1982) which integrates many epistemological positions, concepts and methods from different disciplines to theorize children and childhood in novel ways (Alanen, 2012, p. 420). Before its emergence, developmental psychology and functional sociology have dominated research about children over the years (James & James, 2012). These influential research approaches were criticized for implicitly portraying children as inferior to adults and that childhood is a step towards achieving adulthood (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998, p. 208). On the contrary, childhood studies have challenged these developmental, adult-centric and future-oriented concepts for viewing children. As identified by James and Prout (2015, p. 7), two central features of childhood studies in its early days were that children are worthy of study 'in their own right, and that childhood should be understood as a 'social construction'. Following that, reflecting on the dominance of western ideologies on children and childhood, contemporary childhood studies emphasize the importance of researching children and

childhood in context to examine the diversity of children and childhoods (e.g., Abebe, 2012; Abebe & Bessell, 2011). For example, Abebe and Bessell (2011) argue that the idea of work-free childhood stemming from the idealized western childhood might not be suitable for some children in Asia or Africa as they need work to support themselves and their family members. Their constructive arguments invite reflection on the diverse notions of culture and social norms within societies that result in diverse childhoods, which also invokes me to reflect on the similarities and differences between childhoods in China and Norway, and what this might mean for children who experience everyday life in both contexts.

Childhood studies is an interdisciplinary research field incorporating plenty of theoretical perspectives (Barrie Thorne, 2007, cited in Alanen, 2012). Alanen (2001) has summarized three main perspectives within childhood studies, which are the actor-oriented (child) perspective, structuralist (conflict) perspective and constructionist perspective. In addition to these three perspectives, there are other theoretical perspectives within childhood studies, such as relational perspectives (Alanen, 2005), intersectional perspectives (Alanen, 2016) and postcolonial and decolonial perspectives (Hanson, Abebe, Aitken, Balagopalan, & Punch, 2018). These theoretical perspectives provide researchers with different angles to view children's world and generate rich knowledge about children and childhood. Further, Alanen (2001) argued that the boundaries among the three main perspectives are blurred, and they could be combined. That is, they could be applied in researching a certain topic in the relatedness to children and childhood by complementing one or the other perspectives. Hence, the actor-oriented perspective combined with the constructionist perspective constitutes the theoretical basis of this research, which provides a useful angle to understanding migrant children's experience of moving from China to Norway. Briefly, the actor-oriented perspective guides me to explore migrant children's agency in migration, adaptation, and self-identification in their everyday lives, while the constructionist perspective provides me with an angle to view the construction of transnational Chinese migrant children and their childhood, as well as trying to find the differences and potential tensions of discourses on children and childhood in the Norwegian and Chinese contexts.

### 3.2 The (child) actor-oriented perspective

It is argued that children's voices have often been neglected or 'muted' historically (Hardman, 1974), and children's competencies and autonomy have been seriously underrated. Viewing children as passive and incompetent objects that need to learn the roles and social norms to become "complete" adults stems from the socialization concept and developmental psychology (R. Nilsen, 2009). On the contrary, the (child)actor-oriented perspective argues that children are social and active subjects, and children should be understood and researched in their own right (James & Prout, 2015). In line with this argument, childhood scholars argue that children are subjects, participants, and reliable informants in research (e.g., Dyblie Nilsen, 2005; James & Prout, 2015; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). Ethnography, qualitative research methods, participatory method and 'child-friendly' methods are highly recommended by scholars in childhood studies to grasp children's perspectives and give children a voice (Ennew et al., 2009; James, 2007).

Generally, the actor-oriented perspective guides people to explore children's life, experience, practices, and viewpoints in different places, including but not limited to family, school, welfare institutions, streets, and workplace (R. Nilsen, 2017). In this



research, the actor-oriented perspectives guide me to explore the experiences and feelings of children moving from China to Norway and to explore their experience of post-migration everyday lives in Norway. The actor-oriented perspective will be will not be limited to shed light on phenomena like how children take tactics to cope with challenges during their adaptation process and how they negotiate diverse and even conflicting expectations from adults, based on their own perceptions of 'Norwegian childhood' and 'Chinese childhood'.

### 3.2.1 Agency - a relational concept

Agency is the key concept within the (child)actor-oriented perspective. The actor-oriented perspective highlights children's roles as social agents and explores how children practice agency and actively engage in their social lives (Thorne, 1993). The way people understand children's agency is a progressive process (Valentine, 2011). In the initial period, it was mostly about viewing children's agency as the capacity and competencies that children have and navigate their lives or the wider society. In this argument, much research focuses on finding "evidence of agency" (Abebe, 2019, p. 12) to testify that children have agency. However, agency is nothing one owns or has; neither children nor adults *have* agency. Instead, agency exists when people *do* or *practice* it (Oswell, 2013, italics by me). Thus, viewing agency as capacities and competencies is not sufficient in studies.

Valentine (2011) has argued that agency is complex, multidimensional and ambivalent and "agency cannot be understood as the exercise of authentic choice of self-directed action" (p. 348). This argument breaks with a universal understanding of agency, where people often romanticize agency and view it as a 'good' thing of children (Abebe, 2019). Following her suggestion, social models of agency "that recognize(s) the particularity of children and the social embeddedness of the agency of both children and adults" would be more reasonable than traditional concepts of agency in childhood studies (Valentine, 2011, p. 354). Abebe (2019) also put forward that "there is a need to go beyond the recognition that children are social actors to reveal the contexts and relational processes within which their everyday agency unfolds" (p.80). This means children in different contexts might practice different sorts of agency with other agents intra/inter-generationally. Thus, the concept of children's agency is a critical, context-based, and relational idea, and it could change due to the place, time and people around them.

I agree with Valentine and Abebe's suggestions on understanding of agency in a more critical, context-based and relational way. In this research, I explore how migrant children practice agency in their everyday lives based on their and their parents accounts. At the same time, this research also puts children's agency in context in order to examine the constraints children meet because of their role as children in migration.

### 3.2.2 Being, becoming and have been

The debate about being and becoming has been heated within childhood studies. 'Being' refers to a person's nature or behaviour, and 'becoming' refers to a transition towards change (Natanasabapathy & Maathuis-Smith, 2019). In childhood studies, 'beings' present children's role as children, and their lives and behaviors at present, while 'becomings' present the idea of children's role as adults in the future (James & Prout, 2003). The concept of becomings is stemmed from the predominant concept of socialization and developmental psychology (R. Nilsen, 2009). As mentioned above, the future-oriented conception has been heavily criticized in childhood studies. Childhood

scholars emphasize children's present role and view children as active social 'beings' rather than 'becomings' (James et al., 1998). However, Uprichard (2008, p. 303) argues that it is necessary to view children and childhood as 'being and becoming' because childhood is temporal. Uprichard's work demonstrated that children themselves in her study could hold such a view. Uprichard argues that "[...] how we conceptualize something in future may influence how we conceptualize it in the present" (Uprichard, 2008, p. 304). This means how children view themselves and the world they live in would influence their current decisions. Hence, the concept of 'becoming' is necessary to shape a well-rounded image of children.

Beyond the beings and becomings, there is a 'third temporal state' – have beens (Cross, 2011, p. 26). Cross (2011, p. 26) argues that there is a call for a third temporal stance (have been) to demonstrate how children are orientated in the present and future because the previous experiences will impact on them. Further, Kingdon (2018) found that children exercise their experience and knowledge to develop and inform their roles and inhabit their possible future roles through role-playing. In his study, a child used the knowledge of being a policewoman from his aunt to apply in the role-play, while he also used the role-play to discuss the future role that he hopes to inhabit. Hence, Kingdon argues that having a well-rounded construction of children should consider children's experiences in the past and present and their future desires (Kingdon, 2018, p. 365). Viewing children as beings, becomings and have beens expand the exploration of children's agency since agency could be influenced by previous, current and future contexts (Kingdon, 2018; Uprichard, 2008).

Transnational migrant and adaptation experiences appear to allow for integrating these three temporal states. This theoretical concept is useful to my analytical work because transnational migrant children live in a migrating childhood, and their migration experience constitutes an important part of their life experience. They are who they are because of the experience that shaped/shapes/will shape them. Hence, in this research, migrant children are understood as 'beings, becomings, and have beens'. They are 'beings' in their current lives; they are 'becomings' because they are aware of their future roles; they are 'have beens' shaped by their experiences. This concept also guides this research to examine how migrant children use the being, becoming, and have been knowledge and experience to shape their current lives negotiate different expectations and construct their future roles.

### 3.2.3 Children's voices

Listening to children is the basic principle of child-centered research. Children's voices have been neglected or muted historically (Hardman, 1974). Though children are more often invited to express their own viewpoints and suggestions nowadays compared to past days, their voices are still not guaranteed to be heard (James, 2007). This is because children's role as social actors is not fulfilled (James, 2007), where people rarely draw attention to children's voices in the daily world. James argued that if we can treat children's small voices carefully, they can be made to speak to larger issues. Thus, although transnational migrant children from China to Norway have a limited population in Norway, their attitudes and life experience are still worth to be noted.

Despite the fact that promises to 'give a voice' to children appear to be moral and have been primarily framed by good intentions, many scholars have called for critical reassessment of such claims. For example, James argues that child voice in research texts was not authentic in nature but should "be recognized as crafted" as child voices in

research texts have been selected, interpreted, and represented by researchers (James, 2007, p. 265). Further, James supports Qvortrup's suggestion and argues that children's own perspectives, voices, and agency must be set alongside other work exploring the structural conditions that shape childhood as generational space (James, 2007, pp. 269-270). This means that the different societal forces have huge impacts on children and their lives that cannot be neglected during listening to them. In respect of this argument, this research seeks to use a constructionist perspective to provide a big picture of the transnational migrant children's world, building a bridge between children and other aspects of society. Meanwhile, children's voices are the most important empirical data of this study. In this sense how to hear children's voices, how to gather voices from them, and how to select, interpret and represent children's voices is very important. The semi-structural interviews along with multiple methods such as drawing, photovoices, and sentence completion will encourage children to express themselves, which will be further explained in the following chapter. Last but not least, as argued by Kj rholt, Moss, and Clark (2005, p. 176), "it is highly important to be aware of the unspoken words by which children construct their identities and social practices in everyday life", which influences me to treasure both spoken and unspoken ways that children express themselves.

### 3.3 The constructionist perspective

While the (child)actor-oriented perspective positions children as social beings with a large focus on children's agency (Dyblie Nilsen, 2005; James & Prout, 2015), the constructive sociology views childhood as construction with concerns about what impact such constructions have on children's lives (Alanen, 2001). Though these two perspectives offer different analytical focuses on children, they are not purely contradicting each other. Instead, they mutually work to understand children in a specific time and context more comprehensively. On the one hand, Foucault is often interpreted as viewing subjects as effects (shaped by) discourse (Leipold & Winkel, 2017), which I will unpack further below. The actor-oriented perspective could complement social construction theory by examining children exercising agency to affect discourses on children. On the other hand, constructionist theory helps the actor-oriented theory explore children's agency in a more critical, discursive, and reflective manner.

There are many different versions of social constructionism (Burr, 2015, p. 2). Sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman first raised social constructionism in their book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that all meaning and knowledge are created, and knowledge exists in a historical and cultural context, which means the understandings of knowledge vary from time and space. Social constructionists believe that "taken-for-granted realities" are not inherent but are cultivated from "interactions between and among social agents"; furthermore, "these realities are constructed through social processes in which meanings are negotiated, a consensus formed, and contestation is possible" (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010, p. 174). Childhood studies incorporate the ideas of social constructionism, assuming that children and childhood are historically and culturally constructed. As James and Prout (2015, p. 6) stated, "The immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful are a fact of culture." This argument means the way to view children is not only limited to 'nature' or objective viewpoints but also requires more cultural understanding of children and their lives. Since constructionist argue that there is no fixed and universal reality but a 'mutual reality', where people share similar cultural, historical, and social understandings (Jenks, 1982)

the understanding of children and childhood also varies. In this way, social constructionism guides childhood scholars to explore how categories are created, how bodies of knowledge are built and how childhood is seen and understood in any given society.

Philippe Ariès was one of the pioneers to view children and childhood as historically constructed, and he argues that "attitudes to children have changed over time, and with these changing attitudes a new concept developed, [namely] childhood" (Gittins, 2015, p. 28). Ariès' work inspired Zelizer (2004) to explore how cultural factors influenced children's value in the USA from the late 1800s to the 1930s, where she found that people preferred adopting "*useful*" children (with good physics) in the nineteenth century (industrialization) replaced by *the vulnerable infant* in the twentieth century (post-industrialization). That means the ideas about children are not fixed while it is changed from time and space and deeply influenced by social and cultural values in a specific time and society. As Nilsen points out, "Various constructions of children and childhoods are part of ongoing cultural production and reproduction processes, acted out by agents at all ages, in different ways and different contexts"(R. D. Nilsen, 2008, p. 39), which indicates that childhood is continuously shaped and reshaped in different contexts and by multiple actors. In line with this viewpoint, the construction and reconstruction of the transnational childhood include not only the cultural values of children in the host country but also the country of origin, as well as migrants' interactions with other agents (parents, peers, etc.) in their lives.

Additionally, social constructionism enables this research to explore constructions of 'good childhood/child' in different societies – Norway and China. Though the idea of a 'good childhood/child' is a very subjective viewpoint, the cultural values or social norms that shaped such ideas are worth noting. Therefore, the understanding of children and childhood are different in the Chinese and Norwegian contexts and children might practice or obey the different principles to be a 'good' kid. In this thesis, I explore the viewpoints of migrant children and their parents on the idea of ideal children and childhood based on their experience of the society of China and Norway. Social constructionism provides a valuable theoretical lens for the project because it can aid in shedding light on how the discourse on 'childhoods' in different cultures shapes the multiple expectations of transnational migrant children and what kind of challenges and opportunities children might meet during the expectation negotiation process.

### 3.3.1 Discourses and discursive agency

Discourse is a key theoretical concept within social constructionist approaches. Michel Foucault developed the concept of discourse in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972). Lara Lessa summarized Foucault's definition of discourse as "systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs, and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak." (Lessa, 2006, p. 285). Generally, Foucault and his followers believe that there was no universal fact in history, and the 'truth' of human beliefs (*subjects*) was created and shaped by *discourse* (Leipold & Winkel, 2017, p. 513). In childhood studies, discourses are often used to explain that there is no universal fact of childhood but different understandings of childhood in specific socio-historically situated societies (contexts). Moreover, as Foucault is often understood as assuming that the subject is discursively constituted, it leads to an understanding that discourse transmits and produces power affecting human beliefs, knowledge, and the way they understand the social world (Foucault, 1998).

For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has shaped global rights discourses of children and influenced children's lives by setting regulations to determine local practices (Kjørholt, 2008). Viewing children as social participants in the context of right discourses reflects moral values of what it means to be a child. However, in her empirical study, Kjørholt found that it is hard to fulfil younger children and refugee children's participation rights. Due to the hegemonic character of the global rights discourses, the tensions between children's participation rights and the best interest of children have been hidden (Kjørholt, 2008, p. 16). Similarly, Abebe and Bessell (2011) point out that international and national policies have shaped the right discourses of 'work-free childhood', resulting that all types of children's work could be illegal. However, in some contexts, children's work has been seen as a necessary family income and family duty. Many scholars have criticized the hegemonic power of global rights discourses and recommend that the implementation or interpretation of international policy in a specific context must have empirical investigations of children's experiences at both the local and national levels (e.g. Kjørholt, 2008).

It is noted that policy is not the only force that contributes to the shaping of discourse. The charity appeal and advertisements can also influence discourses on children (Burman, 1994). For example, charities and welfare institutions often use the image of innocent, pathetic, helpless children to gain people's sympathy and donation, thus often shaping discourses on children in poverty as vulnerable and dependent (Burman, 1994). Hence, discourses conceptualize people's ideas of what it is meant to be a child. For this study, discourses on children are interpreted by children and their parents. Discourses on children vary within time and space. Since migrant children's childhoods are situated in between two social-historically contexts, they might experience different discourses on children based on contexts. In this thesis, the tensions between discourses on children in Norway and in China through children and their parents' perceptions and interpretations are discussed in the second analysis chapter.

Moreover, since Foucault is often interpreted as viewing subjects as effects (shaped by) discourse, there is a potential tension between focusing on agency and on discourse in a Foucauldian sense (Leipold & Winkel, 2017). I agree with Leipold and Winkel (2017) to position children's agency in a discursive perspective guides this research away from being too structure-focused (Foucauldian constructionist) or too agent-focused (actor-oriented perspective). In their study, Leipold and Winkel (2017, p. 520) demonstrate that Michel Foucault's discourse theory emphasizes more discursive structures creating subjects than individual agents creating discursive structures. Thus, there is a tendency of Foucault's discourse theory to underrate the agency of agents in the social process.

Leipold and Winkel (2017, p. 524) argue for an approach they term 'discursive agency', which refers to "an actor's ability to make him/herself a relevant agent in a particular discourse by constantly making choices about whether, where, when, and how to identify with a particular subject position in specific story lines within this discourse". There are four analytic dimensions of discursive agency approach (DAA), which are policy discourses, political institutions, agents defined via a set of characteristics, and strategic practices (Leipold & Winkel, 2017, p. 517). On the one hand, stakeholders need to define who they are in relation to an overall discourse to present a 'truth' and define their discursive position by creating storylines where they give characteristics to themselves and others. On the other hand, discourses are characterized by different storylines that created by different stakeholders. In this sense, discursive agency is formed by the process of stakeholders creating a position for themselves through the use of language

and adopting certain approaches, and supporting their position and associated political truths (Lang, Blum, & Leipold, 2019, p. 416). In this study, discursive agency is an important analytical tool to explore how children practice agency based on their understanding or perception of their position in certain discourses and make decisions for themselves in order to support their position.

### 3.4 Literature reviews and the chosen analytical tools

In this section, I will present a literature review and analytical concepts that applied in previous studies of transnational migration. First, I would like to clarify the research subjects to narrow down the range of literature reviews. This study is about Chinese children's experience of transnational migration from China to Norway with family. The background of the participants is that they were born in China and migrated to Norway as children. They attended kindergarten or primary school in China and continued primary school or secondary school in Norway. Thus, they are different from second-generation immigrants born in and residing in a country that their parents entered as first-generation immigrants. They are the first-generation immigrant or the 1.5-generation immigrant (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988, p. 141).

In transnational migration research, children often appear as 'parachute kids' and 'left-behind Children' (Orellana et al., 2001). Children who migrate to another country by themselves are often called 'parachute kids' (see Tsong & Liu, 2009; Zhou, 1998), while the 'left-behind Children' (see Poeze, Dankyi, & Mazzucato, 2017; Polanco, 2019) refer to those who stay in their home country while their parents migrate to another country. However, participants of this research migrated to Norway and lived with their parents. They are neither 'parachute kids' nor 'left-behind children'; they are newcomers who live in Norway with their parents. Thus, the literature review will focus on one-generation immigrant children's experience of migration and their living with family in the host country.

There are three thematic subsections in this section, including the study on Chinese children's experience of transnational migration and transnational living; the study on the Chinese child-parent relationship in a transnational migrant family; and the study on transnational migrant children in a Norwegian context. The relevant chosen analytical tools of this research are included in each section.

#### 3.4.1 The study on Chinese children's experience of transnational migration and transnational living

Generally, through reviewing relevant literature, I found six analytical tools often related to this group of children, including transnational migration, acculturation, belonging and cultural identity, generational orderings and interdependence.

##### ***Transnational migration***

The research on immigration in the early days has initially focused on how immigrants start their life in a new society, assuming they would have to abandon their customs, language, homeland ties and identities (Levitt & Schiller, 2004). However, contemporary immigration research scholars have criticized this argument. With the advent of globalization, technologies narrow down people's geographical distances where cross-country connections are more common than in previous days. Immigrants, therefore, are often largely exposed to the culture of their origin society (Levitt & Schiller, 2004). Hence, some scholars argue that cross-border ties are important and should be

recognized as a variable in contemporary migration research (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, p. 1003). Further, Levitt and Schiller (2004, p. 1003) argue that "Once we rethink the boundaries of social life, it becomes clear that the incorporation of individuals into nation-states and the maintenance of transnational connections are not contradictory social processes." That means the process of migrants adapting to a new society, their connections with their homeland, and their daily interactions with people in new and old land can occur at the same time and mutually shape their lives and identities. For this study, participants experience adaptation processes in the new country while maintaining the social or cultural connections to the homeland (Rumbaut, 2004). With the concept of transnational migration, migrant children's incorporation into Norway and connections with family and friends in China reinforce one another to explain the constitution of their identity and a transnational childhood.

However, there is less focus on children in transnational migration research, although they are often a critical reason why families move back and forth and maintain cross-border ties (Orellana et al., 2001). Much research focuses on children in trafficking, travelling alone and other forced migration (see Ghosh, 2014; O'Connell Davidson, 2011). Such studies tend to show the vulnerability of children in the migration process and often attract attention at a more international level. Inevitably, the discourse of children as passive dependents or victims has gradually been shaped by this "mainstream" research, leading to an underestimation of the role and experiences of children in transnational migration (White et al., 2011). In order to shift attention away from dominant discourses of migrant children as 'victims', White et al. (2011) suggest a child-centred perspective is useful to acknowledge children's role and experience in transnational migration. This study follows this principle and provides information about migrant children's experiences and everyday lives while not assuming they are vulnerable or helpless.

### **Acculturation**

Acculturation is an important analytical concept in migration research, which refers to "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both group" (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). Generally, acculturation results include acceptance, adaptation, and reaction (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 152), which are based on what degree of the old culture people maintain. Similarly, Berry (2005) summarized four acculturation orientations which are assimilation, separation, marginalization, and integration. *Assimilation* refers to people who desire to be in contact with the culture of the host culture maximumly while without the desire to maintain the old culture. In contrast, *Separation* is the opposite of assimilation. *Marginalization* refers to people having no desire to contact or maintain the new and old cultures. *Integration* refers to people who would like to maintain both culture and contact with the host. The four acculturation orientations often link to the analysis of acculturative stress (Guerra et al., 2019). The literature on transnational migrant children and acculturation often focuses on the impact of acculturative stress on children's wellbeing, school achievement and mental health. In their work, Rogers-Sirin, Ryce, and Sirin (2014) found that first-generation youth are more likely to experience withdrawn and depressed symptoms during acculturation. Acculturation is an important concept in this research for explaining how acculturation changes migrant children's ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and their interaction ways with peers and adults in their everyday lives.

### ***Belonging and cultural identity***

Belonging is an important concept in transnational children's migration research. Antonsich (2010, p. 645) summarized that the notion of belonging could be understood in two dimensions, which are "belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)". The two dimensions are interconnected to understand the subjects in this study. On the one hand, belonging is a personal and intimate emotional attachment with others. On the other hand, the discursive dimension also is relevant to understanding the children's personal experiences. The idea of the home as a site of security is associated with the widespread assumption that children naturally need stability and security (Ní Laoire, Carpena-Méndez, Tyrrell, & White, 2010), which leads to arguing that migration is traumatic and dangerous to children (Amadasi, 2014, pp. 142-143). This argument could be testified by the fact that a wide range of research focuses on the relationship between children's sense of belonging in the new community and their wellbeing in the study of children in situations of mobility (see Liu, Yu, Wang, Zhang, & Ren, 2014; Sadownik, 2018). In Liu et al. (2014) study, they found that the loneliness of migrant children is often associated with both perceptions of discrimination and be lack of sense of belonging. Meanwhile, Kunuroglu, Yagmur, Van De Vijver, and Kroon (2018) found that a strong sense of belonging to the country of origin plays an important role in migrants' decision to return home, reflecting the fact that transnational migrants' sense of belonging can be both to the host country and to the country of origin.

Cultural identity is another important aspect associated with the issue of children's mobility (Amadasi, 2014). According to Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, and Roy (2014, p. 367), cultural identity is "the symbol of one's essential experience of oneself as it incorporates the worldview, value system, attitudes and beliefs of a group with whom such elements are shared." They argue that the essence of cultural identity is "the image of the self and the culture intertwined in the individual's total conception of reality" (p. 367). Hence, 'culture' determines largely the kind of person an individual will become. A person forms his or her self-perception by interacting with those around him or her and with affirmations from one's culture. The concept of cultural identity often links to the experience of The Third Culture Kids (TCKs). TCKs are defined as someone who lived outside their passport country during their developmental years (Useem, Useem, & Donoghue, 1963). Most research assumes that movement leads to identity confusion for TCKs and concerns their ability to alternate between their two or more cultural identities successfully. Much research in this field tends to describe children's mobility as a challenge in their identity formation as children are less likely to have a solid identity during the process (Amadasi, 2014). However, Amadasi suggests that viewing cultural identity as a form of *positioning* could help break the discourses on migration as a danger to children. The principal aspect of viewing cultural identity as a form of positioning is to explore how children position themselves and other people in interations through their ongoing discursive practices (Amadasi, 2014). For this study, the concept of belonging and cultural identity is vital to analyze how migrant children recognize themselves and others, as well as migrant children's active participation in social processes.

#### 3.4.2 The study on the Chinese child-parent relationship in the transnational migrant family context

##### ***Generational orderings***



The concept of generational orderings is useful to explain the Chinese child-parent relationship. The Chinese concept of *xiaoshun*<sup>8</sup> (obedience and filial piety), *guanjiao*<sup>9</sup> (discipline and training) and *Interdependence* can be linked to the concept of *generational orderings*. Alanen and Mayall (2001) developed the term 'generationing' as a structural feature of child-adult interactions, which include 'childing' and 'adulting' practices. Qvortrup argues that there is a relationship between the social categories of childhood and adulthood (Alanen, 2009, p. 159). Alanen described this relationship as 'generational order', which means "a structured network of relations between generational categories that are positioned in and act within necessary interrelations with each other" (Alanen, 2009, pp. 161-162). Generational order theorizes the social positioning where one position is or becomes dependent on the reciprocal action taken by the other (Alanen, 2009, p. 165). Taking the 'nuclear family' as an example, as a system of relations, it links individuals in the institution with positions/roles of husband/father, wife/mother and the children. The theory of generational order is often applied to analyze the interdependency of child-parent (e.g. Alanen & Mayall, 2001). However, the generational order has been criticized for being too dualistic and not dynamic (Oswell, 2013; Prout, 2000). Punch argues that using the term *generational orderings* can avoid being too dualistic since "generational order is not only a binary between childhood and adulthood but also includes intra-generational relations" (Punch, 2020, p. 134). In this thesis, generational orderings are used to explore the interactions between migrant children and their parents, as well as examine how children's peer interactions promote parents' interactions.

### ***The concept of xiaoshun (obedience and filial piety), guanjiao (discipline and training) and Interdependence***

By reviewing the literature on the Chinese child-parent relationship in the migrant family, a wide range of literature stresses the Chinese parenting style (e.g., Hua & Costigan, 2012; I. Padmawidjaja & R. Chao, 2010; C. Wu & Chao, 2017). The parental practices (parenting) of Chinese immigrants are different from those of European immigrants, where Chinese immigrant parents think parental control is more necessary (I. A. Padmawidjaja & R. K. Chao, 2010, p. 37). The idea of 'parental control' is often related to the concept of *xiaoshun* (obedience and filial piety) within Confucianism (Adler, 2002; Chao, 1994). The interpretation of the *xiaoshun* within the Confucian context is that children should be absolute obedient to elders and superiors (Adler, 2002). Traditional filial piety practices often include 'multigenerational co-residence, providing material support, and being respectful and obedient to one's parents' (Lin, Dow, Boldero, & Bryant, 2020, p. 565). The concept of *guanjiao* (discipline and training) is often described as the parents, older families and teachers taking the responsibility to teach, develop and govern children into moral citizens (Chao, 1994). In the study of Lyså (2018), the understanding of *guan* in the Chinese kindergarten context is with positive meanings and as 'loving control', where parents and teachers govern and teach children relevant discipline with love.

Moreover, in line with filial piety and family closeness within Confucianism, the Chinese family has often been described as interdependent and collectivist (Wang & Hsueh, 2000). For example, in some rural areas of China, people take the responsibility of caring

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<sup>8</sup> 孝顺, which can be translated as 'people undertakes the obligation to serve your parents or other elders and submit to their wishes.'

<sup>9</sup> 管教, which can be translated as 'discipline and educate children.'

for younger and older families to receive the same care when they get older. The notion of interdependence often appears in transnational migration research. It is used to explain that immigrant parents sacrifice themselves to work low-status and intensive jobs to provide their children with financial support, while the children repay them with good academic performance (Suarez-Orozco, 1991; Tseng, 2004). In this thesis, the Chinese concept of obedience and filial piety (*xiaoshun*), Chinese parenting (*guanjiao*) and the notion of interdependence are important concepts to analyze the Chinese child-parent relations in the migrant family.

### 3.4.3 The study on transnational Chinese migrant children in the Norwegian context

Norway is not a destination country in priority for the Chinese, where the population of Chinese in Norway is much less than the other long-standing countries of immigration countries, such as the USA and Canada. Thus, there is a limitation of literature on Chinese migrants in Norway. There are two recent works focused on Chinese immigrant families in Norway. H. Zhu (2015) pointed out that Chinese immigrant parents facing significant parental stresses stem from contextual challenges and acculturation problems, and parental behaviour has influenced the child-parent relationship. The other work examines the importance of social interaction at the early stage of a person's life in a foreign country by exploring Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergarten (Chen, 2013). The results reveal that Chinese parents have a positive attitude toward their children's inclusion in Norwegian society. These two works contributed to filling the gap of Chinese immigrants in Norway. However, I have found the existing research that focuses on adults' perspectives, and that of children's perspectives largely missing in the picture. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap among Chinese migrant children in Norway, seeking to explore the challenges and opportunities they meet and their perceptions of the things and people around them.

## 3.5 Summary

This chapter presents the introduction of the theoretical basis of the study. Overall, this study comes from the field of childhood studies and utilizes actor-oriented and social constructionist perspectives as the theoretical foundation. These two perspectives provide different angles to view children and their lives. Listening to children's voices is the crucial principle of this research. The actor-oriented perspective is vital to this study as it provides a theoretical basis to analyze children's migration experience, adaptation and a sense of belonging and cultural identity in the first analysis chapter. Furthermore, the social constructionist perspective is the theoretical foundation of the second chapter, where the constructions of children and childhood in transnational contexts and how children perceive discourses on children are addressed. These two perspectives and their key concepts are combined with the chosen analytical tools to better understand transnational Chinese migrant children and their daily lives.

## 4 Methodological Reflection and Fieldwork Setting

This chapter introduces the methodology and the fieldwork setting of this study. There are three sections in this chapter. First, I present methodological perspectives that underpin the research design, including childhood studies, qualitative methodologies, reflexivity and the researcher's role. Second, I discuss the research process, research methods, and personal reflections on the challenges and difficulties I faced during the fieldwork. Following that, I will explain the relevant ethical consideration of this study. In the end, I will explain the process of transcription and analysis.

### 4.1 Methodological perspectives underpinning the research design

The *methodology* is the philosophical basis of a thesis which is derived from the theory to determine what methods are used to collect the information (Beazley & Ennew, 2006, p. 190). In other words, methodology frames the perspective to approach the research subjects and collect valuable data, which helps meet the research objectives. This study aims to understand transnational migrant children's experience of family migration from China to Norway. The methodological perspectives derived from childhood studies guide me to design the research plan and approach migrant children and their families in order to meet the research objectives. The detailed explanation is as follows.

#### 4.1.1 Childhood studies and qualitative research methodology

In order to meet the objectives, I chose the methodology of this research based on the theory of childhood studies (James & Prout, 2015). The research objectives of the study are twofold. First, this research aims to acknowledge children's experience of their transnational migration and their everyday lives in Norway. Second, this research aims to acknowledge migrant children and parents' experience of 'Norwegian childhood' and 'Chinese childhood'. As mentioned before, developmental psychology approach children as if they had not yet become fully competent, rational and socialized human beings. They put forward solutions to help children meet the 'universal' attainment, competencies, and other standard requirements at different ages (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). In this sense, children have often been portrayed as objects rather than active subjects and participants in developmental psychology and sociological research (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). In the field of childhood studies, there is respect for children's life experiences and trust in their ability to provide profound information about their experiences. Thus, it is doing research *with* children rather than doing research *on* children in childhood studies. Children are viewed as subjects, reliable informants and co-participants in research, and childhood is viewed as a construction that varies in different contexts (James & Prout, 2015). These two principles derived from childhood studies set the methodological perspective of this study. In this study, children participate as active social actors and competent individuals whose experiences, everyday lives, and voices are vital and respected. At the same time, their views are valued and believed to affect their and others' lives. Children's perspectives are central to this study.

Furthermore, qualitative research is highly valued by scholars from childhood studies. Qualitative research is grounded on how to understand, experience, produce and interpret the social world from different philosophical perspectives (Mason, 2017, p. 3). Meanwhile, qualitative research aims to have a comprehensive, detailed, and contextual understanding of a specific study that emphasizes methods that are 'flexible' and 'sensitive' to the social context of data generation (Mason, 2017, p. 3). Since childhood studies emphasize children's interpretation of their own experiences and the diverse understandings of childhoods based on different contexts, qualitative research is very useful for childhood researchers to meet their research objectives. For example, many scholars in childhood studies have practiced qualitative research in the form of ethnography (James, 2001). In this study, qualitative methodologies are employed in order to understand transnational migrant children's experience of family migration from China to Norway and their post-migrant everyday lives. The qualitative research methods in this study are in-depth interviews, observation and task-based activities, which have helped me to gain data on migrant children's experiences, everyday lives and their perspectives on family migration. Besides, as important stakeholders of children's everyday lives, parents are involved in almost every aspect of the child's migration and adaptation process and know the child well. Thus, parents' perspectives are a valuable addition that are also included in the discussion.

#### 4.1.2 Reflexivity

Researchers in qualitative research need to be highly active involved in the research process and interact closely with the research participants to collect data (Mason, 2017, p. 4). Qualitative research often requires the researcher to be sensitive to each context of the research process and develop active skills, which include "identifying the key issues, working out how they might be resolved, and understanding the intellectual, practical, moral and political implications of different ways of resolving them" (Mason, 2017, p. 4). These abilities for qualitative researchers are related to 'self-questioning activity', also known as self-reflexive acts. As argued by Mason (2017, p. 5), reflexivity means "thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape how your research and what you see." In other words, the acts of reflexivity are about how researchers are aware of themselves as subjective beings to influence the research, which is a required method throughout qualitative research. In the field of childhood studies, the need for reflexivity is paramount as researchers need to consider the nature of childhood and the social relationships between children and adults (Atkinson, 2007; James, 2001; Punch, 2002b). As Punch (2002b, p. 338) argued, the view of treating children as either the same as adults or different from adults is extreme in doing research with children. Instead, each researcher should think about his or her research in terms of the "individual children, the questions asked, the research context, whether they are younger or older children and the researcher's own attitudes and behavior" in order to identify possible differences between doing research with children and adults (Punch, 2002b, p. 338). Therefore, along with the reflexivity of the researcher, each study in children-centered research should be designed with a research methodology appropriate to the specific context of its study, rather than a study conducted solely on the view that children are inferior to adults. In this study, children are active participants and important informants, and reflexivity is employed in this research to help me anticipate, identify and resolve questions arising from the research with transnational migrant children.

### 4.1.3 Roles and relationships between researcher and children

As mentioned above, childhood scholars require active self-reflexivity to deal with potential power imbalance in doing research with children. There is a large amount of active participation and interactions between children participants and adult researchers in childhood studies, leading to potential power asymmetry (Punch, 2002b; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). Since the power asymmetry appears to damage children's agency, researchers should be aware of the methods they use that might impart power hierarchies between them and child subjects (Punch, 2002b). There is a wealth of studies where childhood scholars have taken different researchers' roles to mitigate power imbalances. Such role moderation often comes from their ethical considerations to the specific contexts of their studies. For instance, Solberg (1996) argued that researchers should avoid playing *the parental or educating role* and avoid behaving in advisory, educational or correctional manners when doing research with children. The *least adult role* was put forward by Mandell (1988, p. 458) and widely used in many childhood studies, which means researchers are full involvement while refusing their position as authoritative adults in research. P. H. Christensen (2004) described her role as an *unusual adult* because she believed that the researcher is first an adult who needs to follow certain adult rules while avoiding the negative impact of traditional adult images on the child. At the same time, she adapted to the rules of the child's world while constantly reminding herself of the problems associated with the imbalance of power as a researcher. Likewise, Corsaro (2003) highlighted in his research that he is an '*atypical or incompetent adult*' who does not mind being bossed around by children, and he argued that avoiding being 'adult-like' can help build trust between children and researchers. T. Abebe (2009, p. 458) argued that being in a *friendly role* expresses positive emotions and a desire to be with the children which can help him build bonds of trust with children. Through their tailored strategies, different researchers were able to build bonds with children in their research and manage to mitigate power imbalance. Furthermore, a number of studies have pointed out that the traditional Chinese culture's concept of the hierarchies between the elders and children leads children to be obedient to the orders of elders or other adults (Adler, 2002). In such cases, children may be asked to do things that might be contrary to their own ideas. It is also worth considering that a deliberate emphasis on adults being more equal to children may also result in some children feeling uncomfortable because they are not used to this. Therefore, I decided to adapt my role to the actual situation. During the fieldwork, I identified myself as an 'unusual guest' who is a researcher and would like to approach them to get a better understanding of their lives, experiences and ideas during visiting their home. I did this in the hope that the children would not just treat me as a typical 'guest' but that I would establish an equal and cooperative relationship with them to complete this study. Compared to the usual guest, I, as a researcher, came to the participants' homes not just for a visit but also for research, where children were also aware of it. As an 'unusual guest', I obey the rules of being a 'guest' and also have a clear mind for my research. Both the children and I are actively involved in the research process in this research. I took notes about all the interactions between the children and me while also keeping an open mind to view the children as the experts in their lives and me as the researcher listening, understanding and re-telling the children's opinions and ideas.

## 4.2 The fieldwork setting

### 4.2.1 The recruitment process, gatekeepers, and accessibility

This research was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic and the conduct of my research was therefore limited and challenged in many ways. I officially started the fieldwork a week after I was approved by Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD)<sup>10</sup>. I have been in Norway for less than a year and because of the Covid-19, I have not been able to reach many people, and I was not sure that the city I lived would be able to find enough samples. I created two posters based on the NSD template and guidelines. I posted them on social media in the hope of attracting potential participants. The text in the posters was in Chinese as the research focuses on the first generation of Chinese immigrants who speak Chinese as their first language. In one of the two posters, I designed the poster by adding drawings to help people with literacy or reading limitations understand the study's general intent (see Figure 3, only the drawings are shown, the full version of the two posters can be found in the appendix 9.2).



**Figure 3: The friendly version poster for people with literacy or reading limitations**

I then shared the poster with two friends of mine who were from China and worked in Norway after studying there. They have been in Norway for more than five years and knew more potential participants than I do. One of the two friends suggested that I could put the poster into a WeChat<sup>11</sup> group. The group is a mutual help group, where Chinese people help each other in Norway by sharing information, meeting from time to time and

<sup>10</sup> NSD is a Norwegian national research infrastructure, which takes responsibility to ensure that data about people and society can be collected safely.

<sup>11</sup> WeChat is one of China's most popular social media messaging apps and is similar to WhatsApp.

having regular events. All the people in the group have lived in Norway for many years and know each other. My friend added me to the group and then I put the poster in after a short self-introduction to everyone. This method, however, did not help me find potential participants in the short term. I suspected it might because people have many uncertainties about my status as a researcher and my research intentions, since they did not know me well.

When I struggled to find enough participants, a friend of mine introduced me to L<sup>12</sup>. L, who had migrated from China to Norway at an early age and was the organizing leader of a Chinese cultural and educational association, where she participated in and organized many socio-cultural and educational events. In this way, she knew many Chinese immigrant families. Punch (2002b) has pointed out the importance of rapport building with gatekeepers as they may control the researcher's access to child participants. L was an essential gatekeeper for this study. Through her introduction, I was able to meet five Chinese families. L had good relationships with these five Chinese families. It was clear that they were less uncertain about me and my research intentions because of L. Three of the five families expressed willingness to participate and would like to wait until their children gave consent. The other two chose not to participate in the study due to concerns about the Covid-19 pandemic. Subsequently, one of the three families decided not to participate in the study because their child did not want to participate. I expressed my understanding and did not ask them again. Thus, I found two families to participate my research because of L.

One week later, another two families showed their interests in doing research with me by email after reading the posters on a Facebook group. I was sure that I did not post the posters on any Facebook groups. I checked Facebook and found that a kind person I did not know had helped me by uploading a poster on the 'Chinese in Norway' Facebook group. This group has 3223 Chinese living in different parts of Norway. Thus, this kind person helped me to expand the search for more potential participants. I then sent a private message to thank her. It was a bit late to identify the last participant. This participant was from a referral from one of the families already involved in the study.

Conducting qualitative research during the pandemic period was indeed extremely challenging. People can become worried and distant from each other because of the pandemic, making it difficult to conduct close studies during this period. In addition, as an international student, conducting research in an unfamiliar place made me spend a lot of time finding research participants in the early stages of the study. I realized that if the researcher had a referral from someone the participant knew well, then the participant would be relieved of a lot of confusion and uncertainty.

#### 4.2.2 Research site and location

I initially planned to conduct the research in City A<sup>13</sup> Norway; however, I found the potential participants were limited in City A. Moreover, I knew there was another researcher who was looking for participants in the Chinese community in City A. I avoided overlap with the participants of this researcher's study. Thus, I decided to expand the research site to other cities in Norway. Finally, there are three participant

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<sup>12</sup> Pseudonym

<sup>13</sup> Pseudonyms, as these three locations had fewer Chinese families eligible for recruitment and could potentially identify who they were. To protect the privacy of the participants, I decided to keep the three cities anonymous.

families from City A and one family from City B, and one from City C. Based on the chronological order in which each family was interviewed, I have produced a table (see Table 2) containing how they were recruited in the study, their location and the form of their participation in the interviews.

<b>Family</b>	<b>Recruitment through</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Interview format</b>
<b>Yiming’s family</b>	Gatekeepers’ social networking	City A	Physical
<b>Lily’s family</b>	Gatekeepers’ social networking	City A	Digital (Zoom)
<b>Silvia’s family</b>	Online social media, posters	City C	Physical
<b>Nicolas’s family</b>	Snow-balling approach	City A	Digital (Zoom)
<b>Xiaoya’s family</b>	Online social media, posters	City B	Digital (Zoom)

**Table 2: The information about recruitment, research location and interview format of participants**

Zeitlyn and Mand (2012) argued how research locations that featured in the different settings such as home, school and youth clubs affected the conditions of research. They mentioned that the multi-sited method was useful when doing research with transnational children. The multi-sited method refers to researcher doing research with children in multiple places where they regularly go, such as homes, schools and playgrounds. However, considering all the participants in this research were from different schools and different grades, it was not a good idea to gather them together, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, children might not be willing to talk when they are in a strange situation (Punch, 2002a). Thus, I decided to do research with children respectively at their homes. Moreover, three families offered to be interviewed by zoom out of consideration for the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, I conducted physical interviews with two families and online interviews with three families. The reasoning and choices concerning this mix of in-person and digital research will be explained as follows.

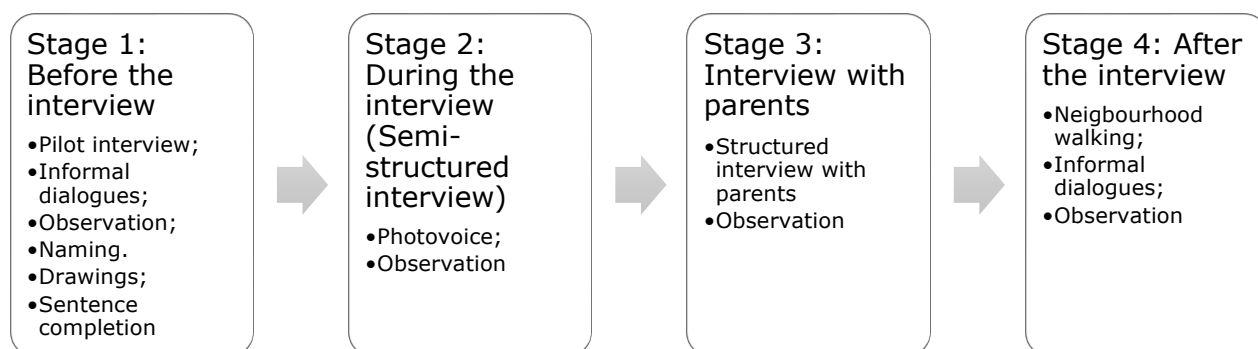
### 4.3 Research tools for generating data

In this section, I will discuss the methods I use for generating data from the field. The qualitative research interview is the main research tool for this study to generate data. As argued by Kvale (1983, p. 174), the qualitative research interview is “an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning described phenomena”. There are many ways to gather these descriptions. The face-to-face interview is the most widely known, while interviewing using the Internet is also increasingly valued with the development of computer technology (Opdenakker, 2006). This study utilizes both the digital and face-to-face interviews. Opdenakker (2006) argued that there are pros and cons to both face-to-face and digital interviews. For instance, he mentioned that compared to the face-to-face interview, the digital interview could extend access to participants. Internet



interviews allow participants from all over the world to be included in your research, while it might be expensive and take much time to do the face-to-face interview if the interviewee is located away from the interviewer. According to Opdenakker (2006, p. 3), no other type of interview can take great advantage of social cues such as facial expressions, body language, and personal interaction to collect information like the face-to-face interview. This study was originally planned to be a face-to-face study with direct access to the participants in the hope of being able to observe their interactions with their families and environment. However, three families chose to participate the digital interviews because of concerns about Covid-19. Through reflecting on my interview process, I have come to realize that there are advantages and disadvantages to these two interview methods. On the one hand, face-to-face interviews have helped me to gather many social cues and let me know more about the participants. However, face-to-face interview could be limiting because I got very nervous and came across as unnatural and contrived when I first entered the homes of people I did not know. This situation was alleviated as the interview progresses. On the other hand, using online interviews helps me reduce transportation and time costs, and being able to conduct interviews at my own environment reduced my nervousness. However, online interviews limited my observation of the participants' living environment. Therefore, after the online interviews, I tried to communicate with the interviewed families about the possibility of home visits and face-to-face communication. One family agreed to a home visit if the epidemic eases and I came to conduct this visit after one month. During this home visit, I was able to get into the children's daily lives, add some questions from the previous interview, and visit places where the children go to school and outdoor activities on a daily basis.

Furthermore, Punch (2002b) put forward that interview combined with 'task-based activities' can be useful for stimulating further discussion during the interview. This study also included task-based research methods such as drawing, sentence completion, and photovoice. Overall, there are four stages of conducting research with participants. I did multiple task-based activities such as naming, drawing, photovoice and sentence completion in the same visit but in the different stage of the research process. As shown in Figure 4, I conducted pilot interviews with a friend and a classmate of mine before actually meeting participants. I conducted informal dialogues and observations before the interview to build rapport and trust with the participants. I also asked participants to do naming, individual drawings and sentence completion before the interview. The finished drawing and sentence completion chart were used to stimulate the discussion during the interview with children. Child participants and I had neighborhood walks and informal conversations along their school-home routes to get to know them better. While I was conducting interviews with parents, the child participants would be in other rooms doing their own thing, and vice versa. Then children and I returned their home, and I packed my belongings and said goodbye to them. The whole process is shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: Outline of using methods in four stages**

#### 4.3.1 Before the interview

##### ***Pilot interview***

Sampson (2004) argued that the pilot work in undertaking qualitative and ethnographic research was invaluable, as it can not only facilitate the research in a proper direction but also help the researcher to have serious consideration before immersing themselves into the 'field'. Thus, I conducted a pilot interview before doing the interview with the participants. The volunteer (Q) I had a pilot interview with was someone who moved from China to Norway when she was nine years old. Q had expressed interest in this study during the recruitment phase, but she later did not participate because she was 19 years old, which is older than the age requirement for recruitment. I chose her as the subject of the pilot study because she shares the same background and immigration experience as the research participants. This pilot test helped me adjust the way to ask questions and anticipate what might happen in the final interviews and where the topics would go in the semi-structured interviews. In addition, I invited a classmate, H, as another interviewee of the pilot interview who could give suggestions from a researcher's perspective. Although doing pilot interviews improved my interview skills and helped build my confidence before the final interview, these interviews did not fully reflect the situation of the final interviews. First, the participants had not been in Norway as long as Q, and their answers to the interview questions were different as a result. For example, when I asked the children how their childhood in China was different from their childhood in Norway, the children who had been in Norway for a shorter period would feel that it was not different from their childhood in China. However, Q would give a more information and examples of people she knew who had childhoods that were different from their childhoods in China and Norway. Secondly, some of the participants were not as talkative as Q, so I added some explanations to them regarding the interview question. Finally, each interview changed depending on the interview setting and the interviewee's situation for the day. Therefore, I believe that pilot interviews are a good way to improve the researcher's interviewing skills, as well as their ability to adjust and adapt. Still, they cannot fully reflect on the final interviews. This makes me confirm the

importance of being flexible and adaptive to the actual interview situation as a researcher.

### ***Informal dialogues and observations***

Many scholars have recommended the importance of building rapport before interviewing, which could construct rich material (Tatek Abebe, 2009). Tatek Abebe (2009) argued that having some informal dialogue could help researchers build rapport with children. Thus, I did not have interviews with the children immediately; instead, I conducted informal dialogues with the participants to build rapport with them. We started by introducing ourselves to each other and they showed me around their homes. During the house tour, I could conduct both observation and informal dialogues with them. For example, we discussed their current life, the weather, their feelings and the Chinese-style decorations in the house, and their books and medals on the shelf. We began to know and trust each other through informal dialogues. Meanwhile, I noticed that the children were more comfortable during the informal dialogue. They gradually became relaxed and confident by introducing themselves to me. Some of the children showed a sense of ownership by introducing me to their familiar environment and things and had a sense of accomplishment of being the host.

According to Clark (2017), unspoken words such as facial expressions, actions, and body language are also a significant source of information in research and can be discovered through observation. I conducted observations throughout the study and wrote down my observations daily during fieldwork. The initial observation took place before the interview, where I noticed that the participants had the same sense of nervousness and uncertainty as I did when we first met. Still, those feelings eased as we found our roles in informal dialogues. Moreover, through the observation, I could know about the current atmosphere in the family and the relationship between children and parents. For example, before I interviewed a particular family, I watched a talk show with them in their living room. While watching the show, I could feel that the communication and interaction between the members of the family were harmonious and loving. During the interview, observations helped me adjust the questions and actions based on the participant' actions and answers. For example, when I found children disinterested or misunderstood he questions, I would make some explanations and prompts. The observations alongside the field notes provided me with empirical data on children's everyday family experiences and benefited me to reflect on my research experience.

### ***Naming***

According to Ennew et al. (2009, p. 2.13), "Researchers are responsible for protecting all research participants from any emotional or physical harm injury." Considering the importance of privacy and confidentiality, all participants (children, parents and gatekeepers) were anonymous, and children could choose a name for themselves. I asked the children to choose a name to represent themselves. I also asked the reason why they chose this fake name to help me know more about them. One child was not interested in this process of naming, and he did not have a name in mind. Then he asked me which name I would choose if I were he. I told him that my method was to change the order of the letters in my name to form a new name. I further explained the reason for my thoughts, because when I was a child and met strangers who did not know me and wanted to ask for my name, I would use a fake name for protecting myself. Later, I explained to this child that one of the important functions of naming is to protect his or her privacy. In the end, he decided on a fake name for himself.

## ***Drawings***

Drawing is a useful research tool for data gathering in qualitative research. Drawing can be very helpful as it provides a way to express, articulate, and analyze participants' thoughts, opinions, experiences, perceptions, and behaviors (Bowden, Lockton, Gheerawo, & Brass, 2015). Punch (2002b) argued, "younger children tended to prefer drawing and were less inhibited by a lack of artistic competence" (p. 328). This research aims to understand children's experience of family migration from China to Norway and their current life experiences in Norway and in the new environment. Thus, I conducted individual drawings before the interview with the participants by asking them to draw pictures based on two themes – 'my life in China' and 'my life in Norway'. Participants finished drawing before the interview and they explained to me their drawings during the interview. Punch (2002b) found that drawing could be a fun activity for children to portray their world and express their viewpoints. In my study, I observed one of the children, who was very introverted and not very talkative but this child was particularly interested in drawing and spent about twenty minutes talking about the drawing with me. Moreover, I found that drawing was a good way to bring the children back to the topic of the study and to remind them that we were conducting research activities. I conducted some informal conversations with the participants before the interviews, but sometimes the conversations went far beyond the topic of the research itself, so I needed to bring their attention back to the research itself. When I did the drawing activity, the participants became more engaged in the research process, which facilitated the smooth conduct of the rest of the study. However, there were some drawbacks to the drawing method. In this study, three children did not want to draw. After my own reflection, I think the reason for this is that drawing the assigned topic was like being given a task by the teacher, which could be a burden for the children, so they did not want to draw. Instead of forcing the children who did not want to draw to continue drawing, I used informal dialogues to help them remind their life in China and their life in Norway as an alternative to drawing.

Moreover, in her study, Punch found that the way to ask what children have drawn is also important. Since children she studied were in a rural community in Bolivia and hard to be exposed to visual imaginary and drawing learning, their drawings were self-explanatory and representative (Punch, 2002b, p. 332). In such a situation, it would be very rude to ask the children what you had drawn when they only drew a tree, a flower, a sun, etc. She suggests that it is necessary to ask children in an open way to explain what their drawings mean to them and why they decided to draw these images rather than directly asking them "What have you drawn?" (Punch, 2002b, p. 332). In this study, when I saw that the participants' drawings clearly had only a mountain and an ocean, I avoided asking them what you had drawn and instead asked them what it meant to them and what their intentions were to draw it that way. In this way, I could learn more about what the children were trying to express through their drawings.

## ***Sentence completion***

Another method I used for exploring migrant children's feelings about current life in the new environment is sentence completion. As argued by Ennew et al. (2009, p. 5.32), sentence completion is a suitable method for exploring sensitive topics with children. I designed a chart with five sentences that need to be completed: 'I am good at...', 'I am proud of...', 'I wish...', 'I am afraid of...' and 'my favourite...'. All of the children completed sentence completion, so I was able to get an idea of each child's preferences and

dislikes. For example, from the sentence 'My favourite...', I could know children's hobbies and preferences, while from the sentence 'I am afraid of...', I could understand what makes children feel unsafe or uncertain. However, there are some limitations to this method. For example, some children were younger and could not write many words, so they expressed unwillingness to finish the chart. I did not force the children to continue writing but encouraged them to express themselves around the sentence completion by telling or drawing. Sentence completion also helped me to understand the children's stronger opinions. One of the children wrote, "I wish no after school", and "I am afraid of after school", expressing his intense dislike of online classes.

Overall, Informal dialogues, observation and naming combined with task-based methods of drawing and sentence completion play the role of ice-breaking and stimulating materials for the later interview, which promoted the semi-structured interview with children to go smoothly.

### 4.3.2 During the interview

#### ***Semi-structured visual interview***

Compared to a structured interview, a semi-structured interview will have fewer pre-determined questions, thus allowing the interviewer to explore the issues raised by the interviewee (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). As argued by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 6), the semi-structured interview refers to "an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena." In this study, I want to understand the world from transnational migrant children's point of view. Children are viewed as competent individual, active actors and important informants in this research. I would like to know what they know in the way they know it. The semi-structured interview helped me to explore participants' knowledge or world with some open-ended questions, and dig deeper into the interviewees' responses through follow-up questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Thus, I conducted the semi-structured interview with participants to meet the research questions. I used an interview guide to guide the interview, which includes five parts: the general questions, questions about children's family migration experience, questions about children's family and school life experience in Norway, questions about children's feelings about norms of being a child in different contexts, and the ending questions (the full interview guide that can be found in the appendix).

In semi-structured interview, it is often a good idea to design a few "easy" questions to start the interview, to make the interviewee feel comfortable and to familiarize him/her with the subject matter of the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The drawings and sentence completion charts finished by children were used during the interviews to explore children's life experiences collectively. During the discussions on questions of family life experience and school life experience, I used drawings to help children recall their memories. For those children who did not draw, I asked them to share photos of their time in China with their families to help them remember during the interview. They showed photos of 'my families or friends' and 'my happy moment'. The children were invited to explain what the photos represented and meant. This method is a way to know children's previous life and emotional connection with the other families in China. It also helps to show the differences between children's previous life in China and current life in Norway.

However, the semi-structured interview has disadvantages. As argued by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), "we should not regard a research interview as a completely open and free dialogue between egalitarian partners" (p. 37). The research interview involves a clear power asymmetry between the researcher and subject. I used many methods to mitigate the power imbalance in the interviews. For example, the entire interview guide was designed and questioned by me, and the children were not involved. However, in the next interviews, I adapted the interview questions to allow children to express themselves more freely, based on the experiences gathered in the previous interviews.

Moreover, while I was doing data transcription and listening to the audio record, I found myself often using examples of my own experiences to promote the interview process. For example, when I asked children to describe how they felt about living in Norway in three words, some of them would say they did not know how to answer and then ask what I felt, and I would tell them what I felt and why. On the one hand, this interaction helped the interview continue. On the other hand, my answers may influence and shape the children's answers to some extent. Therefore, in later interviews, I tried to avoid using my own experiences as examples, but instead explained the questions as much as possible and helped the children to recall episodes of their lives so that they could think about the questions from their own perspectives.

### ***Interview with parents***

There is a need to bring back adult voices in any analysis of children's participation because the relationship between children and adults is not just about "a zero-sum conflict of power" (Wyness, 2013, p. 440). Instead, children and adults are in interdependent relations, and "children's voices could be heard and acknowledged through more interconnected relations between children and adults" (Bjerke, 2011, in Wyness, 2013, p. 440). In this study, parents' voices are very crucial because they largely determine the children's migration, and they are involved in the whole process of children's migration and adaptation. At the same time, children have had important effects on their parents such as promoting the parent's social adaptation into the new community.

The interview with parents was more structured and formal, but still leaving spaces for answers and following probing questions, which in other words, are still semi-structured interviews. Four of the five families participated as both parents in the interview together. When parents were in the interview at the same time, they sometimes disagree about each other's views. For example, when talking about expectations for children. A mother expressed her expectation that her daughter would become a great person in the future, while her husband, who is also the father of the child, expressed the opposite opinion and wished her daughter could find a job in the future and that was it. They spent a lot of time arguing over this point of view. However, I did not deliberately emphasize the need for parents to have an agreeable point of view or to disrupt their arguments. I respected each participant's point of view and recorded everything in its entirety for the next step of analysis. For some personal reasons, one family decided that the mother would conduct the interview with me alone. I started interviews with general questions like 'can you tell me a little about your family?' and 'How many children do you have?' Afterward, I asked them questions about general perceptions on the social-cultural differences that affected the conception of children and childhood between Norway and China. Then, I finished the interview by asking the parents some open-end questions, like 'If you could choose three words, how would you describe your everyday

life with the children?’ Interview with parents provided important empirical data for the analysis, especially in the discussion of child-parent relations and the different expectations on children.

### 4.3.3 After the interview

#### ***Neighborhood walking***

There were three participants that had neighborhood walking with me. The first neighborhood walking took place between Silvia and me. It was a spontaneous, child-led activity, as the idea for the walk came from Silvia and she decided the route. Since this was a spontaneous activity, I did not have too much time to consider its pros and cons. Similar to the walk interviews, safety, weather, and participants' physical capability were factors that influenced the neighborhood walking (Kinney, 2017). I made my decisions based on the safety and the weather conditions outside. During the neighborhood walk, I found children liked to speak more and often talked about things that were beyond the interview questions. I reflected that some children felt pressured in the interview, especially when they noticed the presence of a tape recorder and they felt the need to provide me with "valuable" information. However, when walking outdoors, they were willing to add to their answers and to talk about something other than the interview because they felt relaxed. Silvia took me on a ten-minute walk from her house to her school, where she explained to me how she got to school with her dad every morning. Then we returned from her school and passed a playground. She told me that sometimes she would play with her friends at this place before going home from school. There were times when she and her friends came out to play and chose this place as a meeting spot. This activity was initiated by the children and led by the children, and I was a listener throughout the process. Through the neighborhood walking, children shared with me questions and added answers of the interviews. This first neighborhood walk provided me with rich data; thus, I was encouraged to conduct neighborhood walks with other participants.

It should be acknowledged that this was not a long-term ethnographic fieldwork. In this project, I have spent a limited amount of time physically with the participants. It took me around half a day to visit one family. I tried to use this limited time to work with the participants to complete the interviews and task-based activities in one or two visits. Although this is not a long-term participatory visit, my interactions with the participants before and after the visit helped this research move forward. At the same time, I spent a lot of time online and off-line to communicate with participants in the pre-interview period in order to build a collaborative relationship with them. After the interviews, I remained in contact with the participants digitally and they were able to add to their responses at any time. They would send me their added information via email or on WeChat. For example, two weeks after the interviews, one family shared with me their children's school schedules in Norway and China.

## 4.4 Ethical consideration

The goal of research ethics is to promote open, trustworthy, and accountable research (Israel & Hay, 2006). Research ethics aids in the development of excellent scientific practice. Because children are more vulnerable and powerless than most adults, researchers need to pay special attention to protecting children during research with them (Ennew et al., 2009, p. 2.4). This study strictly adheres to the ethical guidelines of the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities

(NESH) in 2021. In the following sections, I present some ethical considerations related to the challenges I faced during fieldwork.

#### 4.4.1 Privacy and confidentiality

Alderson and Morrow (2020, p. 31) argued that privacy is to “avoid undue intrusion into their personal affairs”, and confidentiality is to “conceal their identity and sometimes other details when reporting them”. In this research, all participants’ information was anonymous. Participants gave consent to photos and drawings used in the thesis. The information about participants was kept in a safe place.

The first ethical concern I met was during the recruitment process. I met one of my participants (parent) during the Language and culture festival. She was taking charge of some parts of the activity. We had a short conversation. During the discussion, we talked informally, not mentioning anything about the research. There were many people at the activity at that moment, and it was not a good place for us to discuss the research details. Thus, although the participant personally mentioned their participation in the research, I did not continue this topic with them. Later, after having an interview with this participant and her family, she told me that she could feel my serious attitude as a researcher, paying attention to protecting their privacy. Now thinking back on this issue, I realize that the importance of researchers being clear about their commitment to and awareness of the ethical problems could build trust and recruit participants

Further, I interviewed the children individually, which means the conversations between the participants and me were private; even the parents had no right to ask me about the interview details if it was without the children’s permission. The ethical dilemma here was some parents would not want children to have an interview alone and they wanted to ‘accompany’ children to do interviews. I explained the importance of children’s privacy and confidentiality to parents and explained every method used in the research in detail, enabling them to know that there would be no harm to their children. The interview took place in the living room and study room of the home participant, and the door was open until the end of the interview.

#### 4.4.2 Obtain consent

According to Ennew et al. (2009, p. 2.14), all research participation must be voluntary. None of the children found me on their own. I initially could only contact their parents. Considering the top-down hierarchy between Chinese parents and children, I thought parents might overlook their children’s consent rights. Thus, I told the parents that it was very important to have children’s consent before conducting the research, as every researcher must follow established ethical principles. Moreover, as argued by (Ennew et al., 2009, p. 2.14), “informed consent means that a participant has agreed (consented) to taking part in research, after being informed of and understanding.” Thus, I asked the parents to ensure consent from their children. At the same time, when I met children, I confirmed if they knew about the research and if they were happy to do research with me. Only after receiving positive responses from the children did I begin my research. In addition, some parents withdrew their consent since their children did not wish to participate. I also respected their decisions and asked the parents not to force their children to participate.



#### 4.4.3 Establish equality

As mentioned by T. Abebe (2009, p. 58), "Negotiating unequal power relations is a central part of ethical research." One of the most important ethical concerns in this research was to balance the power relations between child participants and adults. First, I kept in mind the suggestions of Ennew et al. (2009, p. 2.15) that "researchers are not teachers or instructors." Thus, I took some tactics in this research to avoid acting as an authoritative adult in this research. For example, children would address me as 'Ayi' or 'Jie-Jie' (pronounced in Chinese, is often used as a term of endearment for young adult women) when we met, and this addressing of the older person as aunty/teacher or sister/brother is common in the Chinese cultural setting. Thus, I explained that I was not a teacher, and my identity was a researcher. For the rest of the process, they were calling me by my first name. Second, Ennew et al. (2009, p. 2.15) argued that it is necessary to "use words that research participants understand". In addition to explaining the meaning of some words, in the interviews, I found that some of the children would like to use different languages in their answers. Most of the participants were learning to use Chinese, English and Norwegian at the same time. In some cases, they would prefer to use English or Norwegian. For example, in a conversation with one of the children, I asked him to describe in three words how he felt about life in Norway. He answered with three English words and explained them in English, then I spoke to him in English, and we changed the language from time to time during the interview. Last but not the least, it is necessary to "allow sufficient time for building trust and explaining research"(Ennew et al., 2009, p. 2.15). In the pre-interview period, I spent a lot of time in informal dialogue with the children, building trust in each other and explaining the entire study. I also said a formal goodbye and thank you to the children as I left the field.

#### 4.4.4 Reciprocity and gift as tradition during the Mid-autumn Festival

Reciprocity is a debated topic in doing research with children. Some people argue that "children who spent time with the researcher might lose income as a result and they should receive reciprocity as compensation" (Ennew et al., 2009, p. 2.16). My research participants were not children who work and would lose income by participating, but their time and energy still deserved my respect. On the one hand, reciprocity can be a good motivation for participants to participate in research. On the other hand, offering reciprocity to participants can be problematic because it can expose researchers to the risk of bribing and soliciting participants and make others question the voluntary agreement of the participants (Powell & Takayoshi, 2003). During my fieldwork, it coincided with the traditional Chinese festival of Mid-Autumn Festival, during which we usually have the custom of giving each other gifts like mooncakes to express our good wishes. Therefore, I prepared some hand-made mooncakes (yuebin<sup>14</sup>) as gifts for participants. To avoid the possibility of pleasing/bribing the participants, I chose to give them when I left and expressed my good wishes and thanks. Moreover, during the recruitment process, a company found me. It could offer the participants with 8-hours drawing courses as gifts if I agreed to advertise and introduce their product to the participants. This company was a company that offered children-drawing courses digitally, and their target customers were overseas Chinese. I finally rejected their request as I did not want this research mixed with any business practices.

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<sup>14</sup> 月饼, also called Mid-Autumn Cake, which is a traditional food of Mid-Autumn Festival.

## 4.5 Transcription process and thematic analysis

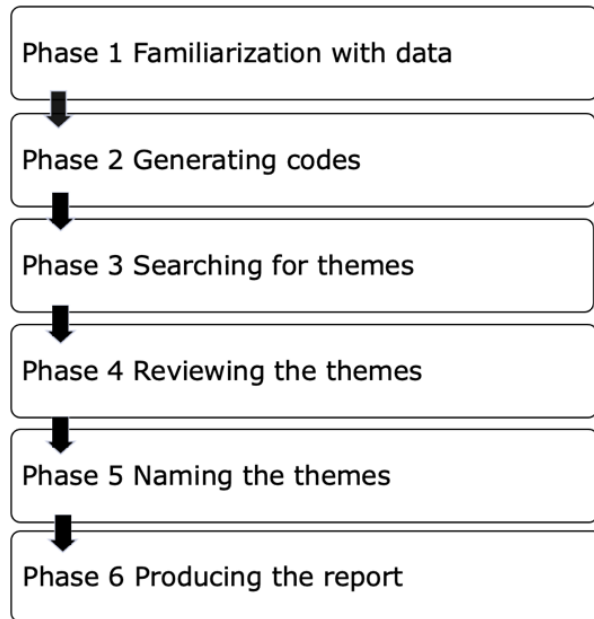
I spent a significant amount of time on transcription and analysis in this study. Thematic analysis (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017) was used to conduct transcription supported by NVivo™ software. As shown in Figure 5, there are six phases in thematic analysis, which are familiarization with data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, naming themes, and producing report.

In order to ensure the quality and breadth of the gathered information, transcription and thematic analysis began after the first few interviews were completed. The initial transcription and analysis work also helped me to do methodological reflection toward the interview process. For example, in my first interviews, I did not give participants enough time to think after asking questions. When there were a silence between the interviewee and me, I would describe and explain questions based on my thoughts and comments, which could be tendentious and not conducive to getting the participants' own interpretations and opinions of the questions. Therefore, in the following interview process, I would set aside the appropriate amount of time for the participants to think about the questions themselves and give their own answers.

Data from the fieldwork was imported into NVivo™ for the thematic analysis after carefully checking for any missing words, which was comprised of the following materials:

- 10 transcripts of the interviews (5 transcripts of the child participants and 5 transcripts of their parents, after checking for any missing words)
- 10 sets of fieldwork notes made by me for supporting the transcription
- Any material shared by participants during the fieldwork

After importing the data, I began the first step of thematic analysis, reading and checking to all the data in order to become familiar with the data and the meaning and the message beneath the literal meaning of the data (Terry et al., 2017, pp. 23-24). The data were then coded by using NVivo™ and initially coded into 123 elements and ten groups. The ten groups were predominately created based on material collected from the interviews, such as "adaptation process" and "perceptions of Chinese/Norwegian childhood", which constructed an early thematic map. After generated a robust thematic themes of the data, it is necessary to elaborate and defining each theme (Terry et al., 2017, pp. 29-31). It is worth noting that when defining a theme, it is important to (re)check the names of themes and determine a name to work well with the finalized themes (Terry et al., 2017, p. 31). I have had some challenging moments with certain theme names. For example, when I named the theme, I used 'adaptation difficulties for children' to describe the problems that encountered by children in the adaptation process. But as I reflected on the data, I thought it might be more appropriate to use *challenges* instead of *difficulties*. This is because from the data, children perceived these challenges they encountered as something they needed to confront, and they mentioned some of the tactics they used to confront the challenges. I believe that the term *challenge* better capture the theme that highlights the children's discursive agency in transnational migration, i.e., they identify, judge, and negotiate the challenges posed by changes (transnational migration) in their environment.



**Figure 5: Phases of Coding in Thematic Analysis, source: Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017**

## 4.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the methodology and the fieldwork setting of this study. I first discussed the methodological perspectives in childhood studies and the reason qualitative research methodology is valued within childhood studies. I then explained the research methods employed in this study by introducing the whole process. I also elaborate on the research dilemmas and challenges I faced before and during the fieldwork, how I perceived them, how I reflected and dealt with them. Last, I reflected on ethical concerns and transcription experience at the end of this chapter. In the next two chapters, I will analyze, elaborate, and discuss the empirical data from my fieldwork.

## 5 Children in transnational migration

This chapter presents the transnational migration and acculturation experience of participants from China to Norway. It starts with presenting the participants' transnational migration experience and their post-migration family and school life, in order to explore children's perspectives and attitude on their movements and present life. Following that, challenges children face in integration process, sense of belonging and cultural identity will be discussed. At the end of the chapter, I will present the participants' tactics to overcome the challenges.

### 5.1 The transnational migration experience of children in this study

As mentioned in the literature review, there is less focus on children and their role in transnational migration research, even though children are often a critical reason for families to move back and forth and maintain cross-border ties (Orellana et al., 2001). In recent years, research about children in trafficking, travelling alone and other forced migration has received much attention globally and many researchers provided profound solutions. However, inevitably, framed by discourses on migrant children as passive dependent or victims have led to children's role and experience in transnational migration being underrated (White et al., 2011). To shift attention away from dominant discourses of migrant children as 'victims', White et al. (2011) suggest a child-centered perspective is useful to acknowledge children's role and experience in transnational migration. Therefore, this chapter considers children's perceptions and hears children's voices about their own migration experiences.

#### 5.1.1 Reasons for migrating to Norway

The participants of this study include five families consisting of five migrant children (three girls and two boys) and nine migrant parents. The age of the migrant children is from 7-14 years old. As shown in the chart below (Table 3), some transnational children have travelled between Norway and China since birth and have followed or accompanied their families moving to Norway for various reasons, such as their parents' work and marriage. Yiming and Lily moved to Norway because of their parent's job relocation, while Nicolas and Xiaoya moved to Norway because of their parents' marriages. Silvia's family decided to live in Norway in 2020 because they were on holiday in another country during the covid-19 pandemic. When they wanted to return to China, the border was closed. Silvia also reached primary school age, and thus, they decided to move to Norway, and Silvia started her primary school life in Norway.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>When did they first come to Norway?</b>	<b>When did they move to Norway?</b>	<b>Country of birth</b>	<b>Country of destination</b>	<b>Reasons for migration</b>
<b>Yiming</b>	13	Male	2012	2016	China	Norway	Parents' job relocation
<b>Lily</b>	10	Female	2019	2019	China	Norway	Parents' job relocation
<b>Silvia</b>	7	Female	2015	2019	China	Norway	Education
<b>Nicolas</b>	9	Male	2013	2017	China	Norway	Parents' marriage
<b>Xiaoya</b>	14	Female	2017	2017	China	Norway	Parents' marriage

**Table 3: The age, gender and reasons for the migration of participants**

By interviewing children about their feelings and perceptions of their migration experiences, it is possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their background. During the fieldwork, I realized that most children understood the reasons for their family migration. Indicating this is the excerpts from two children in the semi-structured interviews:

"We moved here to be reunited with Dad. Before that, I lived with my grandparents in China; my dad first went to Norway to work, then my mother worked in Norway, and I came to visit my mum and dad every summer, and then it was me who moved to Norway to be with my mum and dad."

(Yiming, transnational migrant boy, age 13)

"We moved to Norway to visit my grandparents who live in Norway, and I need to go to school in Norway too."

(Silvia, transnational migrant girl, age 7)

These excerpts show that Yiming and Silvia are aware of their migration reasons, which includes family reunification and education. They did not express dislike or rejection of the family's migration during the interview. These two excerpts reveal that the participants want to live together with their parents and recognize the plan to attend school in Norway. In this sense, transnational children's mobility is not merely passive and negative. Meanwhile, some participants gave examples of what they think of family migration. One of the children used her previous migration experiences to explain her understanding of moving to Norway.

"I have previously lived and studied in the UK and Germany. When you go to a new place, you can make friends quickly if you can speak their language. It's the same when you come to Norway; if you can speak Norwegian, you should have no problem."

(Xiaoya, transnational migrant girl, age 14)

This case showed that Xiaoya actively used her previous migration experiences to assess the current situation and found a suitable way to adapt to the new society. It relates to the concept of children as beings, becomings and have beens. 'Have beens' is a temporal state as beings and becomings, which means children's past experiences can often influence their present and future lives. As argued by Kingdon (2018, p. 365), children are not only "being", "becoming", but also "have been", with a necessity to consider children's experiences in the past and present and their future desires. This study finds that children's experiences influence and shape their present and future roles. For example, Xiaoya had prior transnational migration experiences in which she learned that mastery of the local language was important for integration into the new environment. She incorporated her experience and knowledge into her current migration and adaptation experiences. She found the way to better integrate herself into the Norwegian society was to master the Norwegian language in her knowledge. It indicates that not only do the children have their views on their past lives and migration, but they can use this experience to influence and shape their views on their present and future lives.

### 5.1.2 Children's role in maintaining connection with extended family and friends in China

As mentioned in chapter three, the participants of this study experience adaptation processes in the new country while maintaining social or cultural connections to the homeland. In two families, the parents came to Norway first and left their children to live with their grandparents in China. During the period of separation from their parents, participants lived with their grandparents and other families in China, and they often had deep relationship. Thus, it is common for them to keep regular contact with families in China. During the interview, Silvia and Nicolas expressed their feelings towards their extended families in China:

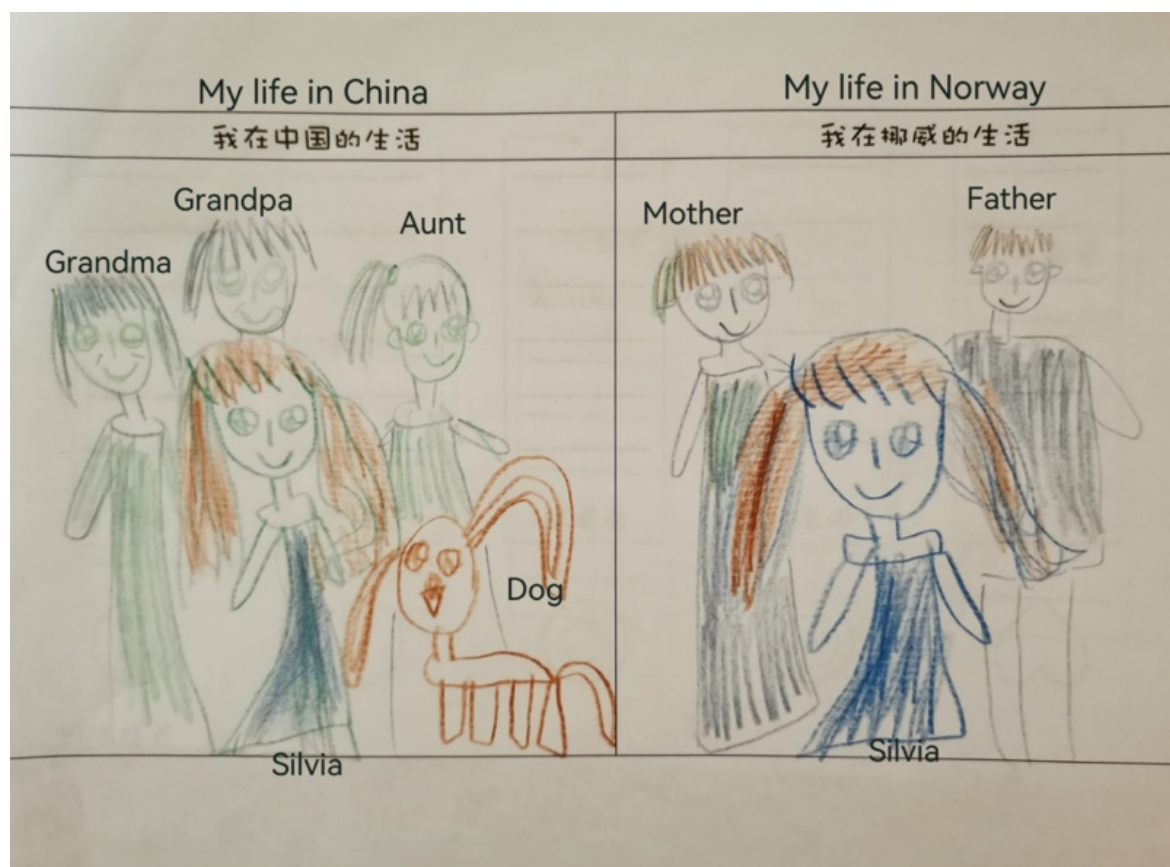
"I miss my families in China, grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins... and our family dog. We come back to China and meet each other at least once a year, but we haven't seen each other for almost two years because of Covid-19" [she shows an unpleasant face].

(Silvia, transnational migrant girl, age 7)

"My grandparents took care of me most before I came to Norway. I do video calls with my grandparents every two days."

(Nicolas, transnational migrant boy, age 9)

Through the interviews, I found that Silvia and Nicolas had a close relationship with their grandparents. They did not lose contact with their Chinese families just because they moved geographically. The other children also had a close relationship with their extended families in China. While in China, most of them lived with their extended families, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles. When they came to Norway, their extended family became a nuclear family, usually consisting of a mother, a father and children. The transformation of family size and structure led some children to feel nostalgic for their Chinese families. The changes in family size and structure had captured by participant and expressed in the form of a drawing. With the drawing method, participants were asked to draw two themed pictures, which were “My life in China” and “My life in Norway”. As shown in Figure 6, Silvia drew both pictures of her life in China and her life in Norway, explaining the drawings:



**Figure 6: The picture was drawn by Silvia, age 7, about her life in China, and her life in Norway**

*Silvia: This is my life in China [She pointed at the left picture]. I lived with my grandparents, my aunt and cousins. We have a dog. We named her Snow-white because she is white. I miss my dog. She is old.*

*Yiru: Where are your cousins?*

*Silvia: I do not have enough place to draw them.*

*Yiru: How about the picture in the right?*

*Silvia: This is my mother and father, and we three live together in Norway. [She points at the picture and says] This is me; I grow up and I am taller now [...] I have the hair colour as my father.*

From this conversation, Silvia showed me her family in detail, expressing how she missed her family and her dog in China. Because moving to Norway was a temporary decision, she did not say goodbye to her family in China. Since her dog was getting older, she was worried about the possibility of never seeing her dog again. The reduction of the figures in the painting also indicates Lily's perception of the changes caused by the migration. This thought made her a little upset, but she became happy when she talked about her life with her parents in Norway. It can be seen from her drawings and her interpretation that she had a close emotional connection with her Chinese extended families. Other participants expressed similar homesickness, which led their parents to decide to return to China from time to time. The migrant families return to China because of the children's emotions toward people from their country of origin. Thus, children become an important role in keeping families connected to the cultural ties of their country of origin.

Meanwhile, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the procedures and quarantine policies for returning to China are complicated, and most families have no plans to return home in summer vacation. The children who were able to travel to and from China every year expressed a stronger feeling of nostalgia. Although most of the families did not return to their home countries for almost two years because of the covid-19 pandemic, they still keep in touch with families in China on the Internet. The participants of this research keep connections with their friends through online social media and online games.

"I keep in touch with my friends through WeChat. People post photos on WeChat. When my friends share photos on it, I will give them likes. We have not met each other so long. I think it is fine since my friend and I both know we are friends no matter where we are."

(Xiaoya)

"I still play games with my friends on weekends, but now there is a time limit for teenagers to play games in China, so we don't have much time to play games together."

(Yiming)

These two quotations indicate that Xiaoya and Yiming have a feeling of nostalgia for their Chinese family and friends. By using the internet, they could keep in good contact with their family and friends in China. Therefore, from the empirical data, children are actively involved in their current life and use their own experiences to influence cross-border family ties.



## 5.2 The family life and school life of Chinese transnational migrant children in Norway

When transnational migrant children move to a new society, acculturation is the most likely issue they meet. Family and school are the two primary contexts where acculturation unfolds (Makarova, 2019). In the family, children are supported financially, emotionally and physically by their parents (Orellana et al., 2001), while at the same time, they are influencing and helping their parents to adapt to the new society. School life is an important place for children to experience acculturation, where they interact with their peers and teachers and integrate into the new environment. This section explores children’s family and school life after migrating to Norway and explains how acculturation changes participants’ ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and their interaction ways with peers and adults in their everyday lives.

### 5.2.1 Family income and parents’ working conditions

The income status of immigrant families have a strong association with the physical and mental health and academic achievement of immigrant children (Mistry, Biesanz, Chien, Howes, & Benner, 2008). It found that children from low-income or poor immigrant families have lower physical and mental development and academic performance than native children (Mistry et al., 2008). In this study, participants’ parents of each family have stable jobs that could provide financial security for their family. As shown in Table 5, Yiming’s parents are academic staff in university. Lily’s father is a university professor, and her mother was in her maternity leave. Xiaoya’s mother was studying for her second master’s degree after her doctoral degree. Moreover, Yiming’s father told me that he came to Norway first and brought his wife and children to Norway after finding a stable job. From the empirical data, participants were all from families with stable incomes and the ability to live and raise children in Norway. Therefore, the financial security provided by their families can protect them to some extent from poor physical and mental health and poor academic performance.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Father’s occupation</b>	<b>Mother’s occupation</b>
<b>Yiming</b>	University Professor in Norway	University Lecturer in Norway
<b>Lily</b>	University Professor in Norway	Maternity leave
<b>Silvia</b>	Governmental staff in Norway	XX multinational corporation staff
<b>Nicolas</b>	Self-employed in Norway	Owner of a transnational company
<b>Xiaoya</b>	XX corporation staff	Master’s study

**Table 4: The working conditions of participants’ parents**

Children depend on adults for physical, economic and emotional care. The migrant children in my study are all dependent on their parent’s financial support. There is a discussion about pocket money between Yiming and me as he expressed that he did not have pocket money but could use a card to buy things he needed.

*Yiru: Do you have pocket money, or is there a situation you earn pocket money?*

*Yiming: No, I don't.*

*Yiru: What if there is a situation in that you need money?*

*Yiming: Swipe the card.*

*Yiru: Who is the owner of the card?*

*Yiru: It is supplementary card of my father's credit card. I am not used to spending much money; I just use it to buy whatever I need and tell my parents when I bought.*

In this excerpt, Yiming explained that he would swipe the card if he needed to buy something, but he would not waste money. I found that all of the children in this study were not only aware of their family's financial situation but were also aware of their parents' financial support and efforts to support them. This has been frequently cited in past research as an important sign that children understand and repay their parents' contributions, leading to an interdependent relationship between parents and children. Family economic condition plays a vital role in children as it could provide them with a sense of security and support their development (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Thus, the financial stability of the family ensured the participants' living and study needs in Norway.

### 5.2.2 The interdependent child-parent relations in the transnational migrant family

In addition to realizing parents' economic efforts, children in this research were also aware of their parent's efforts in providing them with emotional and physical care. This was indicated in the interview with Lily as below,

*Yiru: How would you describe your relationship with your parents?*

*Lily: My parents take care of me, and I also help them at home. My father said we should work as a team when we are in Norway.*

*Yiru: what do you mean the family work as a team?*

*Lily: We help each other.*

*Yiru: What do your parents do to help you? And What do you do to help your parents?*

*Lily: My parents take care of me, such as sending me to school, preparing food, and working. I help them by doing housework, such as taking dishes from the dishwasher and cooking rice before coming home.*

*Yiru: Are you enjoying cooking?*

*Lily: It is simple; I only need to put rice and water in the rice cooker and put the button, that's it.*

Through this interview, we can see that Lily was not only aware of what her parents care for her but also of her duty as a family member, helping out in whatever way she can. In this sense, migrant children are not merely a recipient of care, but also a care provider. In another interview, 9-year-old Nicolas told me that,

*Yiru: Do you help your parents?*

*Nicolas: I helped my mother to learn Norwegian. Her Norwegian is not very good. I often help her to understand the news on the TV.*

*Yiru: Why do you help your mother learn Norwegian?*

*Nicolas: It's important to live in Norway.*

This quote shows how Nicolas helps his mother based on his understanding of important things about living in Norway. Nicolas actively helped his mother learn Norwegian because he realized his mother met language challenges, while language could help his mother to adapt to Norway. Thus, children have significant implications for their parents' social experiences. In Yiming's story, he did not know many people when he came to Norway and had limited social activities. Then he started playing ice hockey on the school team and became loving this sport. He grew up from a non-sociable person to the leading player of the ice hockey team. He made many friends who have the same hobbies as him. He expressed his enjoyment of life in Norway because of ice hockey. His parents also got a chance to expose to Norwegian society and its sports culture through ice hockey. His parents met other parents of children in the hockey team and made friends with them.

"My kid came to Norway and started playing ice hockey. We also started socializing with other kids' parents in the ice hockey team—things like planning the kids' game days together, raising money for game trips, etc. My kid's best friend is a teammate on their hockey team. They hang out sometimes. His friend's parents and we know each other well."

(Yiming's mother)

The above quotation illustrates that the migrant parents' social experiences in the host country are often linked to their children's activity at the school in Norway. Through the school activity, they get to know other children's parents and participate in helping with the school activity. Migrant children's parents open their social circle because of their children and school. This also is indicated in the case of Silvia and her parents, as shown in the below quote.

"Sometimes Silvia invites classmates to stay overnight, and we prepare Chinese food for them the next morning, such as Xiaolongbao and Jiaozi. Silvia's friends welcome this food, and even their parents called to ask me how I made it. I told them. Then we and other parents often share recipes to each other and we

become friends. At the same time, I am glad that Silvia could introduce these Chinese foods to her friends and she is proud of her Chinese identity.”

(Silvia's father)

This quote shows that children’s peer interaction promotes parents’ social experience, where Silvia’s parents and the parents of Silvia’s friends become good friends because of their children’s peer interactions. It is noted that sports and Chinese food can play an essential role in influencing Chinese migrant families' social life in Norway intergenerationally and intragenerationally. Punch argues that “generational order is not only a binary between childhood and adulthood but also includes intra-generational relations” (Punch, 2020, p. 134). In short, intergenerational relations refer to interactions that exist between generations, while intra-generational relations refer to interactions that exist between members of a generation. On the one hand, sports, especially winter sports, are an important part of Norwegian social and cultural life and can be a good medium to help immigrant families integrate into the local community and interact with their peers. On the other hand, the participants' sports activities at school influenced their parents' social networks. In addition, food is another medium to promote intergenerational and intragenerational interactions. As in the quote from Silvia’s father, he mentioned that Chinese food was enjoyed by his child and her peers and led to communication and interaction with other parents. Thus, this study found that sports and Chinese food can influence interactions that exist between members of a generation while influencing interactions that exist between generations.

The empirical data shows that the relationship between participants and their parents is interdependent. In this research, the first aspect of interdependence is the support and care between migrant children and their parents. Migrant children of this research receive support and care from their parents, while they also acknowledge that their parents need their support to adapt to the new society. They helped their parents learn Norwegian and played an important role in their parents’ social experience. Another aspect of the interdependence is the emotional care between migrant children and parents. In Xiaoya’s story, she and her mother were dependent on each other for a long time before her mother married her stepfather and then they moved to Norway. For her, her mother was the only person she could talk to and rely on in her life in a foreign country and a reliable person for her to feel safe and stable. Xiaoya's mother also got touched when she talked about her relationship with her daughter. She and Xiaoya have supported each other all the way. In addition, all families in this research mention that the parent-child bond has grown closer during their time abroad. Parents and children are interdependent in terms of material and emotional support.

### 5.2.3 The school life of transnational migrant children

School is one of the important places for transnational migrant children to socialize with peers and teachers and get familiar with the host country's culture. They receive education in school. All children staying in Norway for more than three months are entitled and obliged to attend school. Children can participate in private school or public school. Many migrant families who would not stay in Norway beyond a term of study will choose the international schools. In this study, four of five children are in public schools and only Xiaoya attends the international school. The public school in Norway teaches in Norwegian and with English course as a mandatory foreign language from Grade one.

Children attending public schools are required to participate in classes with Norwegian as the language of instruction in the same way as local children. However, language becomes a challenge for them to integrate school life and has an implication for their academic outcomes. Most participants did not speak Norwegian very well before they came to Norway. They usually have a period of time to adapt Norwegian. Participants meet classmates from different backgrounds in school and they are more inclined to make friends with classmates who have an immigrant background because such classmates tend to speak English or the same language as them. Below was an excerpt from a conversation between Lily and me, where we discussed her friends at school.

*Yiru: Where are your friends from?*

*Lily: Most of my friends came from other countries, like me.*

*Yiru: How did you become friends?*

*Lily: Because I don't speak Norwegian very well, I prefer to communicate with my English-speaking classmates; over time, we became friends."*

*Yiru: How do you recognize those who speak English, not Norwegian?*

*Lily: I learned that students from other countries prefer to use English. I know this because we have similar backgrounds.*

*Yiru: What is the difference you feel about students with immigrant or non-immigrant backgrounds?*

*Lily: We are foreigners, and they are locals.*

Lily is a ten-year-old girl who has lived in Norway for less than one year. She was in the adaptation process, during which she did not speak Norwegian. The conversation between Lily and me illustrates that she distinguishes herself and other students based on immigrant backgrounds. She tended to identify herself and students from other countries as foreigners and Norwegian students as locals. However, some children have a different experience with making friends. For instance, during the interview with Yiming, who has been living in Norway for six years, he argued that he did not know much about his friends' backgrounds, and they became friends because they both like playing ice hockey and video games.

In addition to interacting with classmates, most people that interacts with participants in the school are teachers. Most Norwegian public schools provide language assistance for students whose first language is not Norwegian (The Education Act, 2019). Participants mentioned that language teachers have helped them. These teachers take specific responsibility for helping new immigrant students adapt to the language of Norwegian and helping them understand the contents of classes. There was a quote from Lily, and we were discussing her relationship with the teachers at the school.

“When I couldn’t understand in class, I would use Google Translator to translate. During the break time, I would meet Ms. A<sup>15</sup>, and she would translate the day’s lesson in English to me and she would teach me some Norwegian. I have a better relationship with her.”

(Lily, age 10)

This quote indicates that Lily’s school provides additional language and learning assistance for her whose first language is not Norwegian. The language teacher plays an important role in helping Lily to integrate into school and social life, and this makes it easier for them to achieve a good connection.

The empirical data illustrates that the participants have different ways of interacting with their peers at school. Children who have been in Norway for a shorter period do not speak Norwegian and tend to find friends with children from immigrant backgrounds. Participants also present that they tend to make friends with those who have the same interests as them. In addition, Norwegian schools offer language teachers and extra learning assistance for migrant children that can help them integrate well.

### 5.3 Adaptation challenges for children

Acculturation has a profound implication on migrant children’s well-being, school achievement and mental health. As discussed in the theory chapter, results of acculturation include acceptance, adaptation, and reaction, based on the degree of the old culture people maintain (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 152). Berry (2005) summarized four acculturation orientations: assimilation, separation, marginalization, and integration. As mentioned early in this chapter, the participants have adapted to life in Norway while maintaining good contact with their families in China. They have mentioned different problems during integration into school and social life in Norway during the interview. In this research, I found that language and food are the two main barriers mentioned by the participants during their integration process.

#### 5.3.1 Language

The language skills of immigrants play an important role in acculturation, which often relates to migrant children’s school adjustment, the formation of friendships and emotional well-being (Kurtz-Costes & Pungello, 2000). Thus, proficiency in the host society’s language can lead migrant children to better integrate into school and social life. In this research, four of five migrant children did not speak Norwegian before they came to Norway, and three of five children express that they are experiencing language barriers in their current life. I found that participants with language barriers are more likely to have feelings of exclusion. In Lily’s story, we can see that her friendship formation was influenced by language. Because she did not speak Norwegian, she felt excluded and differentiated from her Norwegian classmates. There were some excerpts from other participants who talked about challenges related to language:

“The hardest thing for me was the language. I didn’t really understand the classes in Norwegian. Especially in the religion classes, it was too difficult for me,

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<sup>15</sup> Pseudonym

and I didn't understand many of the words in Norwegian related to religion even it translated into English.”

(Nicolas)

“When I came to Norway, all the people around me spoke Norwegian and I spent many, many, many hours in learning Norwegian. At that time, my life is full of Norwegian learning, you know, the after-class time for me was all about learning Norwegian.”

(Yiming)

The excerpt from Nicolas demonstrates how children's learning can be affected by language barriers as he explains that he could not understand the most part of the classes which are taught in Norwegian. Meanwhile, in Yiming's case, he spent plenty of time on learning Norwegian which took away his time for rest and recreation. Migrant children can feel exclusion because of the language barrier. They found it difficult to integrate into school life and tended to feel excluded. Language can also affect their academic and long-term development. At the same time, they were under pressure to learn the language. As mentioned before, Norwegian schools and teachers provide migrant children with a lot of language support to help them adapt to their new environment. However, most migrant families also have parents who do not speak Norwegian and are therefore rarely able to help their children. Meanwhile, in the absence of social network in the new community, it is difficult for migrant family to get help from outside the school. More efforts are therefore needed to help migrant children.

### 5.3.2 Food

Food and dietary habits are often connected to the culture and customs of certain ethnic groups (e.g., Counihan & Van Esterik, 1997; D'Sylva & Beagan, 2011), which has become an important aspect of how the participants experience life in Norway. The food and dietary habits are quite different between China and Norway. During the semi-structured interview, participants mentioned that they are not used to Norwegian food. Some of them have tried to make Chinese food by themselves. There were some excerpts illustrating migrant children's feelings about food:

“I found that my classmates prefer to have bread or sandwiches for lunch at the school, but I prefer to have other food, like Chinese food, you know, fried rice with egg, fried tomato with egg, etc. I am not used to the food here, and sometimes I make some Chinese food and bring it to school.”

(Lily, age 10)

“I'm not really used to Norwegian food... I prefer cooking from my mother. She is good at cooking Chinese food. My grandparents' cooking is also very good, but they are in China now and I haven't had any of their cooking for a long time.”

(Nicolas, age 9)

"The hardest thing for me to adjust to was lunchtime; we only had less than half an hour for lunch. However, in China there is plenty of time for lunch and we take longer to eat than here. At the same time, it is difficult to buy authentic Chinese ingredients in Norway. I often miss Chinese food."

(Xiaoya, age 14)

"When I returned to China during the summer vacation, I would go to eat a lot of delicious food. At the end of the summer vacation, I return to Norway from China, and I would bring a lot of Chinese snacks and ingredients in my luggage."

(Yiming, age 13)

The quotes of Lily, Nicolas, Xiaoya, and Yiming shows that a frequent challenge in their life in Norway is related to food. Lily has learnt to make some Chinese food and bring it to school because she was not used to eat bread and sandwiches as lunch. Xiaoya found it difficult for her to adjust to school schedule as the school lunchtime is too short. Moreover, it is clear that food and belonging are interrelated and that food plays an important role in (re)constituting identity, especially in the context of transnational migration (see, Ferrero, 2002; Mannur, 2009). Bailey (2017) found that migrants' sense of belonging was intrinsically related to the food from Indian migrants' home and memories it generates. In this study, participants' memories and tastes about Chinese food that were prepared by Chinese families connected them to their sense of belonging to China. Food enables them to distinguish themselves from other cultures and a sense of belonging to their culture of origin. In addition, Chinese food has also become an important reason for participants to return to China from time to time that help them maintain the connection with their culture of origin.

### 5.3.3 Cultural identity

As mentioned earlier, cultural identity is an important aspect of how people identify with themselves and those around them. Several studies have identified children's mobility as a challenge to their identity formation because children are less likely to have a solid identity in the process (see, Brown & Chu, 2012; Laoire, Carpena-Méndez, & White, 2016; Salomone, 2010). In this research, I found the participants have dealt with the challenge of cultural identity. Some of them have feelings of exclusion by both the society of origin and the host society. In a semi-structured interview with Xiaoya, she expressed her confusion about her identity.

"I feel that I was a foreigner in Norway since I did not fit in well. However, when I was back to China, my friends identify me as a foreigner too. I understand that they are more local to me to some degree since I now live in Norway. I had been living in China, xx, my hometown for 10 years before coming to Norway, while they consider Norway is my country. I feel that I am neither Norwegian nor Chinese now. I tried to find someone who has the same experience as me. But there were not too many children like me. Thus, I sometimes feel lonely."



(Xiaoya)

This excerpt shows Xiaoya's confusion with her cultural identity; on the one hand, Xiaoya's friends would consider her Norwegian identity because of her geographic relocation, and on the other hand, Xiaoya self-identified as a foreigner in Norway. It is argued that the geographical relocation can lead to the transformation of cultural identity (see, Golden & Lanza, 2013; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). Xiaoya's cultural identity began to show some uncertainty and fluidity because of transnational relocation. On the one hand, she did not identify with her Norwegian identity, and on the other hand, her Chinese identity was not recognized by her friends, which made her feel she was neither Norwegian nor Chinese. In addition, Xiaoya tried to find people who shared her transnational migration experience and to gain resonance, which also connected well with the concept of discursive agency. Discursive agency is about how stakeholders create a position for themselves by language and adopting certain approaches and supporting their position and associated political truths (Lang, Blum, & Leipold, 2019, p. 416). Xiaoya actively constructed a transnational migrant identity by searching someone who shares her identity. Xiaoya self-identified with a new identity that was not determined by the culture or one specific context to which she belonged, but by her own experiences and perception.

In another example, Silvia presented her confusion about the label on her as a foreigner in China. Silvia is a 7-year-old girl whose father is a Norwegian. She was born in China and attended kindergarten there. She moved from China and Norway when she was three years old. She explained that:

*Silvia: When I came back to China, people called me "Xiaolaowai" (children of foreigners) because my appearance was different from others. It's even weirder when I speak because people are always amazed at how good I can talk to Chinese. I also don't like the label "Xiaolaowai". I think I am 100% Chinese in China and 100% Norwegian in Norway."*

*Yiru: What do you mean 100% Chinese and 100% Norwegian?*

*Silvia: It means my identity is not made up of 50% Chinese and 50% Norwegian. My identity is made up of 100% Chinese and 100% Norwegian. I can be fully Chinese in China and completely Norwegian in Norway.*

This quotation shows although Silvia self-identifies as 100% Chinese, she is still defined as a foreigner because of her appearance and language when she was in China. Thus, the transnational identity challenge not only emerges in the host country but also in the original country. Moreover, Silvia exercised discursive agency by positioning herself in a particular country as a fully corresponding national identity in order to free herself from the identity of a foreigner. Silvia made a claim that she could have an identity where she was both fully Chinese in China and fully Norwegian in Norway. She refused the notion that she had to be either or but portrayed her identity as contextual as she explained that she was 100% Chinese in China and 100% Norwegian in Norway, thereby she argued that she could be fully Chinese and fully Norwegian.

## 5.4 Children's tactics to gain a sense of belonging

The discursive agency is about the actor's choice of whether, where, when, and how to identify with a particular subject position by making himself or herself a relevant agent within a particular storyline in the discourse (Leipold & Winkel, 2017, p. 524). Children practice their discursive agency to overcome the challenges they encounter during the adaptation process. They use tactics based on their understanding or perception of their position in transnational migration discourses and make decisions for themselves to gain a sense of belonging.

As can be seen from the above discussion, the participants encountered issues of language, food and cultural identity in the host countries in the process of integration, which can lead them to feel a sense of exclusion. They take many approaches to meet these challenges. For instance, almost all participants are motivated to learn Norwegian to overcome language barriers, though the process of learning can be stressful and difficult. Meanwhile, some participants learn to cook Chinese food to overcome the differences of food and dietary differences between Norway and China. While finding a sense of belonging to the group in Norway by overcoming these challenges, they also relieve emotional stress by finding a sense of belonging in a group of Chinese friends. When I discussed the issue about friends with Xiaoya, she expressed that:

"I took part in online drawing activity before I came to Norway. My best friend in China also took part in this activity. We chat with each other during the activity which made me feel not lonely"

(Xiaoya, 14)

During the interview with Xiaoya's mother, she mentioned that,

"Not long after we came to Norway at that time, she needed to learn Norwegian and also school courses. I was worried that she was under too much pressure, so I planned to cancel her online course, but she was strongly opposed. She attached great importance to online classes and never misses a class. She had a time difference from other classmates in China, but she did not care. Once we were on a family trip, she suddenly remembered that there was an online class that day, and she rode home from a faraway place. Later, I found out that she just came here and didn't get used to it. She didn't have any friends or entertainment. The online course was a rare opportunity for her to communicate with her friends."

(Xiaoya's mother)

The story of Xiaoya indicates that when transnational migrant children lack linguistic competencies and social networking during the adaptation process, they tend to feel excluded and lonely. To solve this problem, Xiaoya attended the same online tutorial course with her friends in China. She released her emotional stress by actively keeping in contact with her previous friends. Xiaoya argued that she does not particularly talk to her

friends about the difficulties or sad things she encountered in Norway, she just felt relaxed and happy with her Chinese friends and was willing to learn with them. In previous research on migrant children, little attention has been paid to the specific methods they use to alleviate the stress and emotions associated with maladjustment. This study found that the sense of belonging children find in their country of origin could help them to overcome the discomfort they experience during the integration process in the host country.

## 5.5 Summary

This chapter presents the transnational migrant children's experiences of migration, post-migration family and school experiences, revealing the interdependent relationship between children and parents in a transnational migrant family. There are three findings in this chapter. Firstly, transnational migrant children are not only passive and dependent care recipients, but they are also care providers, interpreters, and language teachers to their parents. Secondly, migrant children play an important role in influencing their parents' new social network in Norway, where the sporting activities in which the children participate can be a good medium for Chinese parents to open up their social circles. Finally, in this chapter, language, food, and (cultural) identity are three significant areas of challenge in the children's everyday life, which often leads to a sense of exclusion. I have discussed the tactics the participants use to overcome challenges. One of the important tactics for them to gain a sense of belonging is by taking the same online tutoring classes as their Chinese friends, which is rarely revealed in the previous study.

## 6 A 'good' child: The more you go into outdoor activities, the better child you are

*Yiru: What do you think about the idea of a 'good' child in the Chinese context?*

*Lily: Obeying your parents and teacher, studying hard and going to a good college.*

*Yiru: What do you think about the idea of a 'good' child in the Norwegian context?*

*Lily: I think it is almost the same. But there is another addition: you should be good at sports.*

The above transcription is from an interview with a 10-year-old transnational migrant girl who migrated from China to Norway with her family one year ago. The participant responded to what a 'good' child meant in the Chinese and Norwegian contexts. Beneath its literal meaning, the idea of what is a 'good' child has profound significance, which is often associated with the culture and social norms that have formed *discourses* on children and childhood in a specific context. In childhood studies, *discourses* are often used to explain that there is no universal fact of childhood but different understandings of childhood in specific socio-historically situated societies (contexts) (Prout & James, 2015). With distinct social and historical backgrounds, discourses on (ideal) children and childhood can differ in Norwegian and Chinese contexts. Meanwhile, discourse transmits and produces power affecting human beliefs, knowledge, and the way they understand the social world (Foucault, 1998). Regarding the wider society, discourses on childhood reflect the moral value of the society and people's concept of children that of what a 'good' child is. Regards the 'micro-world' of children, discourses on childhood shape children and their parents' values in their daily life, such as attitude, parenting, education, and future planning. Furthermore, the construction of childhood is never fixed to one society or culture because of 'technological advancements and migratory trends' of today's world (Christopher Jenks, Bhatia, & Lou, 2013, p. 121). Transnational migrant children of this research experience adaptation processes in the new country while maintaining the social or cultural connections to the homeland. In this sense, they are likely to meet some potential tensions between Norwegian and Chinese discourses on childhood. Thus, in this chapter, I will first present the discourses on children and childhood in the context of Norway and China that encountered by Chinese migrant families and how these discourses influence their and their parent's life, as well as their responses. Finally, I will illustrate the strategies these families used to navigate the tensions in different discourses about childhood.

### 6.1 A 'good' childhood in the Norwegian context

In the Beijing Winter Olympic Games from the 4th to 20<sup>th</sup> in February 2022, Norway won 16 gold medals, eight silver medals, and 13 bronze medals, which ranked the first in the number of medals that showed off their Winter Olympic dominance again. The excellent performance of the Norwegian athletes in the Olympic Games has led to a wide range of

discussions on the Chinese Internet. Many news reports used the title '*what's the secret to Norway's Winter Olympic success?*'<sup>16</sup> to attract people's attention. Summarizing the discussions from the media, I found that people tended to conclude the secret of Norway's success in sports as the exclusive geographical location, people's passion for sports, and politico-economic support for sports. As argued in the background chapter, the term *friluftsliv*, outdoor lifestyle in Norwegian, is a part of Norwegian culture and national identity (Gullestad, 1997). There are two well-known sayings in Norway: "there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes" ("Det finnes ikke dårlig vær, bare dårlige klær") and "Norwegians are born with skis on their feet" ("født med ski på beina"), which can reflect the role of outdoor life and sports in Norwegian cultural lives. Meanwhile, social constructionism guides childhood scholars to explore how categories created, how bodies of knowledge built and how childhood seen and understood in any given society. In line with the notion of childhood as socially constructed, Nilsen presented that framed by discourses of worry, discourses of the rights of the child, and the nature and the outdoor life, Norwegian culture have constructed 'a robust, rational child subject acting independently with agency and 'expert' knowledge' as the 'proper' child in the Norwegian context (R. D. Nilsen, 2008, p. 50).

### 6.1.1 Migrant children in Norway: The more you go into outdoor activities, the better child you are

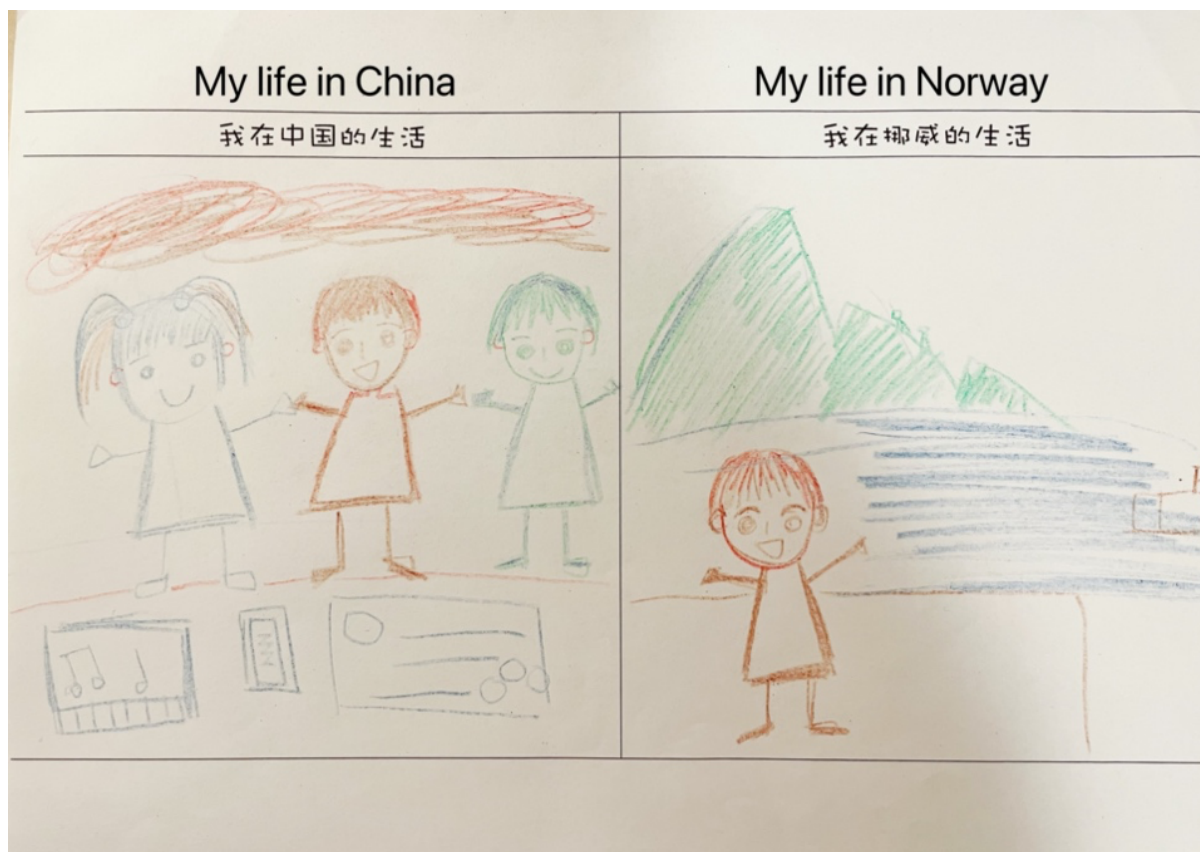
Discourse transmits and produces power affecting human beliefs, knowledge, and the way we understand the social world (Foucault, 1998). The love of nature and outdoor life within discourses on children have dominated people's way of understanding children in the Norwegian context. It assumes that children should have a close relationship with nature and learn necessary knowledge about the outdoor environment (R. D. Nilsen, 2008). Migrant children and parents in my study stressed the difference they experienced between Norway and their country of origin regarding family life and school life. They highlighted the massive passion for nature and outdoor life that they experienced in Norway. Yiming described that he started to play ice hockey when he came to Norway:

"Norwegian children spend more time on sports and outdoor activities. Sport is an important part of their life. I came here and learned ice hockey and fell in love with it."

From this excerpt, we can see that Yiming perceived that one difference between Norwegian and Chinese childhoods was the amount of time spent participating in outdoor activities and sports. This feeling was common among other participants. For example, there are two drawings below by Xiaoya, which show 'my life in China' and 'my life in Norway'. In the semi-structured interview, Xiaoya explained her drawings to me.

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<sup>16</sup> E.g., The news report in Chinese, titled '*With a population of only 5.3 million, it is the "Golden King" of the Winter Olympics. How can Norway perform "Frozen"?*'  
<https://m.yicai.com/news/101320867.html>



**Figure 7: The picture was drawn Xiaoya, aged 14, drawing about her life in China, and her life in Norway**

*Yiru: Can you introduce your paintings a bit?*

*Xiaoya: Yes. I painted about my life in China and my life in Norway. I have a lot of friends in China, and I don't have a lot of friends in Norway.*

*Yiru: Yes, I understand. I have talked about your feeling towards on this. What does the content next to the characters mean?*

*Xiaoya: Oh oh, on the left I drew some things I usually play during the spare time, that is, games, singing, painting, TV programs and so on. The right side is some of Norway's mountains... sea... and so on. More natural scenery. My spare time in Norway is about outdoor activities, I think.*

*Yiru: I noticed that you drew a mountain climber here.*

*Xiaoya: Yes, I think Norwegians love nature and outdoor activities, and they spend a lot of time on it.*

Through the pictures and explanations, we can visualize the difference between Xiaoya's in China and her life in Norway in her eyes. She pointed out that she spent her spare time in China on playing games, singing, drawing and TV shows, while her spare time in Norway was spent more on outdoor activities. According to Yiming and Xiaoya, we could see that the importance of sports and outdoor activities is reflected in everyday life in

Norway. This expression was common among the participants and their parents, many of whom, according to the empirical data, felt strongly about the focus on outdoor life in Norwegian society. In an interview with Yiming's parents, they shared their views on Norwegian culture.

*Yiming's father: Norwegians pay great attention to outdoor life.*

*Yiming's mother: Norwegian children often have a close relationship with nature.*

*Yiming's father: Yes, it is in the school curriculum, I think.*

*Yiming's mother: The concept of nature education is very popular in China, but not the same as in Norway. Here, (nature education) is part of their culture and lives.*

Participants acknowledge that outdoor life is an important aspect of Norwegian culture. The influence of discourse can also be shaped by interactions with people around us (Van Dijk, 1997). Participants live in an environment where parents, peers, teachers, and parents of other students can influence their thoughts. For instance, society's expectations of children are also linked to the idea of outdoor life and love of nature. Participants felt that teachers, peers and parents had expectations of them regarding outdoor activities and sports. This excerpt below illustrated Lily's views on outdoor activities:

"I spend more time on outdoor activities at school in Norway than in China, and teachers (in Norway) always encourage us to go outside and breathe fresh air, even in the cold winter. At the same time, the physical education class here is more systematic than in China, including text knowledge and practice. Physical education classes in China are often occupied by teachers of other academic classes, and then we have to give up some time on physical courses."

Lily's interview revealed that her teachers often reminded them of the importance of spending time outdoors. She mentioned that teachers make them go outdoors even in the cold winter, which showed that the Norwegian attitude to outdoor life differs from many other places. Lily also believed that physical education was more systematic and valued in Norway than in China as she explained that the physical education classes were often occupied by the academic classes when she was in China. Lily was aware through her teachers and school of the importance Norway places on outdoor life and physical education classes. In addition to schools and teachers, some participants said that they would feel the importance of outdoor life and sport in Norway when they encountered their friends' parents. During the interview with Yiming, he mentioned that:

"The last time I visited a friend's house, the friend's parents suggested that we could go outside and play trampolines or ride bikes instead of playing games at home. I feel like that *the more you go into outdoor activities, the better child you are.*" [my emphasis]

This quote reveals that not only the school encourages children to engage in outdoor life, but also the parents and the whole society agree with the idea that *the more you go into outdoor activities, the better child you are*. The love of the outdoors in Norwegian society as a whole is taken for granted and directly shapes the image of the 'good' child in the Norwegian context. However, this perception may be strong for newly arrived migrant children since it may distinguish them from what they have known in their past culture. For instance, as the participants mentioned, they did not feel a social or parental demand for a love of the outdoors while in China. While some participants hold a positive attitude toward sports and outdoor activities, others expressed their concerns. Blow was a conversation between Lily and me, we were discussing the idea of a 'good' child:

*Yiru: What do you think about the idea of a 'good' child in the Norwegian context?*

*Lily: I think it is almost the same. But there is another addition: you should be good at sports.*

*Yiru: How do you feel about this phenomenon?*

*Lily: I think it is a little hard for me. I am not into sports. I like staying at home. Also, I hate being injured during sports. It hurt's, doesn't it?*

*Yiru: What if someone is not good at sports or prefers staying at home?*

*Lily: I think it does not matter to others. But I will feel like I did not fit into the group.*

Lily expressed her concern about being different from Norwegian children because she feels that everyone is good at sports instead of her. She also worried about injuries during sports. Discourses on children reflect the social value of a specific society, which often shows norms of being a 'proper' child (R. D. Nilsen, 2008). As argued before, children are often conceptualized as robust, rational and independent subjects in Norwegian discourse (Kjørholt & Seland, 2012; R. D. Nilsen, 2008). Then, it is open to discussing what if children are not robust, rational or dependent will encounter in their life? Children like Lily, who are not good at sports nor interested in outdoor life and worries about being hurt during sports will be at risk of being considered as vulnerable, weak and dependent. Further, since the notion of love of nature and outdoor life is associated with Norwegian national identity (Gullestad, 1997), children like Lily will more likely to feel different from Norwegians. Thus, Lily is also potentially at risk of not identifying as Norwegian or developing feelings of exclusion.

### 6.1.2 Migrant parents in Norway: Help your children engage in outdoor life

In addition, migrant parents also experience a specific set of parenting norms in Norway. Herrero-Arias et al. (2020, p. 409) state that migrant parents receive advice from Norwegian kindergarten professionals and community health nurses regarding parenting and family leisure. Similarly, migrant parents of this research also received advice from educational institutions on family leisure and children's outdoor activities. There were two quotes of how parents see the school encouraging parents to help their children get involved in outdoor life.



"I think schools in Norway care more about the kid being actively involved in outdoor life than academic performance. The school will propose that parents prepare suitable clothing and tools to allow children to participate in outdoor life at school actively."

(Silvia's mother)

"I know a lot of Norwegian parents who take their kids to their cabins on holidays to ski, walk and climb. I feel the whole society encourages you to take your children to the outdoor, nature and forest. I think it's necessary to get kids involved in outdoor life as it is part of the culture here."

(Yiming's father)

Silvia's mother and Yiming's mother described that they had a sense of the expectations from the society that, as parents, they took the responsibility to help their children to expose to nature and develop knowledge of outdoor life. Regarding this situation, while some migrant parents accept advice on helping their children get involved in outdoor activities, some parents hold a different view, as they perceive a clash in understanding 'proper' parenthood between Norway and their country of origin. In their work, Herrero-Arias et al. (2020, p. 418) find that migrant parents express that their role as risk managers often leaves them in a double bind, where they are expected to protect their children from risks while helping their children to experience necessary risk to develop resilience. Migrant parents argue that it is correct to expose their children to outdoor life, while it becomes incorrect in their countries of origin as outdoor life sometimes means dangers and risks to children (Herrero-Arias et al., 2020). In this research, migrant parents also perceived tensions between child rearing norms in Norway and China. Some parents were concerned that their children would get injuries during outdoor activities and sports.

"I feel that Chinese children are now raised very finely. From grandparents to parents, the whole family pays great attention to all aspects of their children. If they had suffered a little injury, it would have caused a great deal of concern. On the contrary, in Norway people feel that it is normal for children to get a small injury, especially during outdoor activities."

(Xiaoya's mother)

"Parents in Norway are not afraid of their children falling down and getting hurt. Children are very active, and injuries are not uncommon at school, but if a child gets hurt in a Chinese school, the school and teacher are under a lot of pressure from the parents."

(Yiming's mother)

These two excerpts from the interview show the differences between the Chinese and the Norwegian situations for children with minor injuries in sports. As argued in the background chapter, with the development of China's political economy and the implementation of the one-child policy, the new generation of children receives great attention from their parents and grandparents (Xu, 2017). Migrant parents expressed concern that outdoor activities and physical exercise can increase the risk of injury to their children, while parents should protect children from any harm. One participant's mother shared her perspective on child rearing in Norway:

"I think the Norwegian way of parenting is cage-free-rearing, where children spend more time on free play, while the Chinese way is a little more like pen-rearing which often needs to consider whether the child will receive any harm. I am also adapting to the Norwegian way of child rearing, and gradually trusting that my children will not get hurt during outdoor activities and so on."

(Xiaoya's mother)

Xiaoya's mother expressed that the difference in child rearing between Norway and China is the difference between 'pen-rearing' (*juan yang*<sup>17</sup>) and 'cage-free-rearing' (*san yang*<sup>18</sup>) (Xu, 2017). Pen-rearing and cage-free-rearing are two parenting styles that people debate in China. The former emphasizes setting boundaries in children's daily lives to protect them from the dangers of the outside world (Xu, 2017, p. 164). This type of child rearing is common in China, especially when children are under high levels of attention and pressure in today's Chinese society. But people often reflect on the negative or passive effects of this parenting style, such as the restraints on children's creativity (Xu, 2017, p. 164). In contrast, the free-cage-rearing approach promotes giving children enough freedom to explore on their own, exposing them to the outside world, and encouraging them to become independent children. As mentioned by the parents of all participants, they felt that child rearing in Norway is more like "cage-free-rearing" and that parents should not limit children's creativity or curiosity, and helping their children actively explore the outdoors to a large extent. Pen-rearing and cage-free-rearing are different understandings of Norwegian and Chinese discourses on child rearing. They reflect the different cultural meanings of good child rearing and influence the thinking and behavior of parents. Chinese migrant parents, therefore, have been influenced by discourses about what it means to be a good parent in Norway and have changed their approach to child rearing.

## 6.2 A 'good' childhood in the Chinese context

In Chapter 2, I mentioned that Chinese society had greatly changed in recent decades. The childhood of contemporary urban children in China has also changed dramatically. Most obviously, urban children enjoy better material resource than previous generations. At the same time, during the period of family planning policies, each family had only one

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<sup>17</sup> 圈养, a metaphor for a form of education that places more emphasis on parental management of children to promote good habits.

<sup>18</sup> 散养, a metaphor for an educational approach that cares more about the freedom of children to explore, feel, think, and choose as they grow.

child, and they undoubtedly received more care from their parents and grandparents. Besides collectivist civilization, the current Chinese society still has a set of neoliberal values behind the globalized market economy, emphasizing individual free competition (Xu, 2017). Thus, although some traditional ideologies play a large role in today's China, the notion of "good" children has changed. In this research, I found both filial piety and studying hard as a duty are two important roles in shaping the 'good' children's image in the Chinese context.

### 6.2.1 Children: obeying your elders and studying hard as a duty

The excerpts of Lily at the beginning of this chapter show that one of the aspects of being a 'good' child in the Chinese context is about obeying the elders such as parents, grandparents and teachers. In a broad sense, obedience to elders indicates that children need to obey any instructions from their elders. For example, Silvia mentioned that her mom told her about the importance of going to college and that she could only get a good job after college. Obeying the older generation is one of the practices of *xiaoshun* (obedience and filial piety in Chinese discourse). The Chinese concept *xiaoshun* is one of the important ideas within Confucianism, which has had a profound impact on Chinese society historically (Adler, 2002). The interpretation of the *xiaoshun* within the classic Confucian context is that children should show absolute obedience to elders and superiors, with no precondition, even if the elders are wrong (Adler, 2002). Although Chinese society nowadays criticizes absolute obedience, filial piety and obedience to parents have always been important parts of the concept of a 'good' child.

Moreover, in contrast to duty-free childhood in Norway, a 'good' child in the Chinese context also includes studying hard as a duty. As mentioned in chapter 2, most Chinese children are under tremendous pressure to pursue higher education. Getting a good education and attending a good university construct a path to a better future. China has a different school time and school curriculum from Norway, with more school hours, homework and science-based courses. Here are the daily schedules of fourth grade-schoolers in a Norwegian primary school and a Chinese primary school, from what one participant has experienced:

Monday 8:15-13:30	Tuesday 8:15-13:30	Wednesday 8:15-13:30	Thursday 8:15-13:30	Friday 8:15-13:30
Norwegian (60min)	English (60min)	Reading (60min)	Gym (60min)	Science (60min)
Mathematic (60min)	Music (60min)	Outdoor school (60min)	Mathematic (60min)	Social studies (60min)
	Knowledge of Christianity, Religion, Philosophies of life and Ethics (KRLA) (45min)	Theme, signs of Spring (60min)	Norwegian (60min)	Arts and crafts (60min)

**Table 5: Daily routine of the 4th grade-schoolers at the primary school section on schooldays in City A, Norway (provided by participant, translated by me)**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-9:40	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
9:40-10:00	Break				
10:00-10:40	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
10:40-11:00	Break and Eye Exercises				
11:00-11:40	Physical education	Music	Physical education	music	Physical education
11:40-14:00	Break, lunchtime and nap				
14:00-14:40	English	English	English	English	English
14:40-15:00	Break				
15:00-15:40	Moral education and laws	Moral education and laws	Chinese	Moral education and laws	Arts
15:40-16:00	Break and eye exercise				
16:00-16:40	Nature	Nature	Labor and practical skills	Nature	Nature
16:40-17:00	Break				
17:00-17:40	Science and technology	Science and technology	-	Science and technology	-

**Table 6: Daily routine of the fourth grade-schoolers at a primary school in in Shanghai, China (provided by participant, translated by me)**

From the tables, we see that Chinese pupils spend more time (from 9:00 to 17:40) at school than Norwegian pupils (8:15-13:30). Chinese pupils also spend more time on science-led subjects than Norwegian ones. During the interview with participants, I asked migrant children of this research to use three words to describe their life in Norway. They described their life in different ways. All of them mentioned "relaxing" and "boring" as their feelings toward their life in Norway. They stated that the schooling here was more relaxed than in China, and sometimes they felt bored because they had no homework, while their life was occupied by homework when they were in China. There is an excerpt from an interview with Xiaoya, who explained to me why she used the word "relax" to describe her life in Norway.

"I feel relaxed after coming to Norway. You know, when I was in China, I had a lot of homework and sometimes I had to go to bed late because of homework. They don't leave you homework in Norway. The school-off is earlier than in China. Sometimes I came home and found I had nothing to do."

(Xiaoya)

In this interview, Xiaoya said she felt more relaxed than when she was studying in China because she went home early and had no homework. In addition to school hours, many

Chinese students attend additional school classes on school nights and on weekends, so did the participants in this study. One thing the participants all had in common was that they participated in at least one extracurricular class or more, both when they were in China and when they were in Norway. They attended two types of extracurricular classes, one is tutorial classes that help them learn the core school curriculum, including math, language, and writing. The other type of classes are those that help them develop art or thinking, such as piano, art and programming. Table 8 shows information on the types of extracurricular class that participants attended and the amount of time they spent in extracurricular classes each week.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Time spends on extra-curricular class</b>	<b>Type of extracurricular class</b>
<b>Yiming</b>	Eight hours per week	English/Chinese/Mathematics/Music
<b>Lily</b>	Six hours per week	English/Chinese/Arts/Music
<b>Silvia</b>	Six hours per week	Chinese/Arts/Music
<b>Nicolas</b>	Six hours per week	Chinese/Arts/Music
<b>Xiaoya</b>	Eight hours per week	Arts/Music

**Table 7: The amount of time participants spends in extracurricular classes each week**

From Table 8, we can see that all participants are involved in extracurricular classes after school hours. Despite this, they do not study as long as some children in Chinese cities do. From the Macro level, just as every individual citizen, children undertake the duty to enhance the nation's quality through studying hard. From the micro-level, children undertake the duty of achieving good academic performance to make their parents proud. All participants said their parents are very concerned about their academic performance and it makes their parents proud and happy if they get good results in the exams. Three of the five participants said that a major reason they felt the need to study well was that they wanted the approval of their parents. Therefore, good academic performance and study hard become a duty for children, which are involved in discourses on 'good' children in China.

**6.2.2 Parents: parental anxiety on 'homework-free' Norwegian childhood**

From the above information, we see that there is another concern about the way Chinese parents approach child rearing in Norway. Although some parents agree that it is important to develop children's physical quality and resilience through sports and outdoor activities, they think school study should be a priority. Xiaoya's mother expressed her concern to me.

"I felt anxious when I saw my daughter came home without homework and nothing to do. I thought the time was wasted."

(Xiaoya's mother)

Almost all participants' parents expressed this same anxiety as Xiaoya's mom. They feared their child would lag behind in learning in a relaxed and duty-free environment. The parents of this research all have well-educated backgrounds. For example, Xiaoya's mother obtained her doctoral degree in the UK and is currently working on her second master's degree in Norway. Silvia's mother graduated from top universities in the USA and got a good secure job.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Father's education background</b>	<b>Father's occupation background</b>	<b>Mother's education background</b>	<b>Mother's occupational background</b>
<b>Yiming</b>	Doctoral degree	University Professor	Doctoral degree	University Lecturer
<b>Lily</b>	Doctoral degree	University Professor	Doctoral degree	University Lecturer
<b>Silvia</b>	Master's degree	Governmental staff	Master's degree	XX Multinational corporation staff
<b>Nicolas</b>	Bachelor's degree	Self-employed	Master's degree	Owner of a company
<b>Xiaoya</b>	Doctoral degree	XX corporation staff	Doctoral degree	Governmental staff

**Table 8: Migrant parents' education and occupation background of this research**

Participants' parents received the elite education and have established middle-class life. They were conscious of their own elite education-social background and they often had high educational aspirations for their children. For example, there is the story of Yiming's mother. Three years ago, when she was working in Norway, one of her colleagues asked her, "Would you like your child to be a carpenter?" She expressed at the time that she did not really want her son to be a carpenter because carpentry is not a very decent profession in China. She told me that even now, three years later, she still feels the same way. Although she knows that carpentry in Norway is not badly paid and people barely judge any jobs, she still cannot accept her son becoming a carpenter.

Another example concerns children's higher education comes from Silvia's family. Silvia's mother and father told me that "I think it is impossible for her (Silvia) to not go to university. Concerning the current social environment and our family's situation, her father and I all graduated from the top university, so she definitely will go to college." Later on, they added "if she really thinks that going to college is unnecessary, we can understand, but we should know the reason." However, after just two seconds of hesitation, they said with an affirmative tone, "she will definitely go to college". Here is a conversation I had with Silvia's mom about her views on the Norwegian education system.

*Yiru: What's your opinions on Norwegian education system?*

*Silvia's mother: I'd love that if they (the Norwegian education system) had a gifted program. You know, the gifted program like we had in China or the USA, but they wouldn't have. I want a gifted program because I want my daughter to get extra help in*

*some areas that she's good at so that she doesn't feel so bored in the classroom. Secondly, I want to be able to have more access to her performances. I hope that we can know more about her performance not just in the class but in the nation, like the national line of her age. That's what other countries do, like China and the USA. China has the citywide or province-wide test, and you know what position your kids are in the city. The USA has the national line to tell what position your kids are in the nation and give you suggestions. But Norway does not have this, and parents do not have access to children's academic performance."*

As seen in the excerpts from this interview, Silvia's mother compared the Norwegian education system to that of other countries, such as the United States and China, and argued that it lacked the opportunity to learn about one's level among one's peers. She felt that it was difficult for students to know what other areas they needed to work on when they did not know their own level. She also hoped that the gifted program would help fast learners learn more. The lack of after-school homework, no programming courses, and too easy knowledge of natural science subjects lead the Chinese migrant parents who emphasize elite education to be concerned that childhood in a Norwegian context seems overly liberal and lenient. As a result, some parents made comments about the Norwegian education system and wish adding elite education.

### 6.3 The transnational migrant family: Searching for harmony among different ideas on 'good' childhood

On one side, there is an emphasis on the love of nature and outdoor life in the Norwegian context. On the other side, there is an emphasis on discipline, obedience and studying hard as a duty in the Chinese context. From the discussion above, Chinese migrant families experience tensions with 'Norwegian childhood' and 'Chinese childhood'. Firstly, framed by the notion of outdoor life and nature, children in Norway are expected to get actively involved in outdoor activities. At the same time, migrant parents worry that their children will be at high risk of being injured. Second, the promotion of free play in Norwegian discourse on childhood can cause migrant parents to worry about their children's academic regression.

Chinese families have a challenging attitude towards their transnational migrant life in Norway. As they argued, they are accepting the notion of love of nature and outdoor life. This is because they think that embracing the notion of nature and outdoor life allows them to better adapt to integrate into Norwegian social and cultural life. In the long term, a love of sport develops good physical fitness and keeps the child healthy. On the other hand, maintaining good academic performance and studying a science-oriented curriculum can also help children to gain a place in a globally competitive market. The new generation of Chinese transnational migrant families is not limited to finding strategies for living in the host country. Moreover, they plan long-term development plans for the whole family based on what they perceive to be the discourses on childhood. In this sense, despite the influence and power of discourses on humans, humans are able to exercise their agency to skillfully integrate the different discourses and find the most suitable place for themselves, and then influence the discourses.

#### 6.3.1 Acceptance of the Norwegian childhood

Despite the fear of injury from their children's outdoor activities, almost all parents recognize the long-term significance of sports and outdoor play for their children. First, all they think it is good to be athletic and have enough outdoor life experience for

integrating into Norwegian life. Second, as argued in Chapter 2, many Chinese parents now worry that their children are spoiled and lack resilience. The understanding of 'frustration education' is that "placing children in situations considered challenging for them, was thus done in order to balance out their mental state so that they would learn how to master and cope with contemporary and future challenges." (Lyså, 2018, p. 274). Consequently, Chinese parents, some of whom believe the outdoor life and the corresponding knowledge of sports in Norway is a good way to develop children's resilience and adaptability, and promote outdoor life, which is full of proper exercise, adventure and a healthy environment. Moreover, China promulgates policies in recent years to reduce children's academic stress and to strengthen physical education classes. They all show that society as a whole is beginning to attach great importance to the all-around development of children's physical and mental health. Therefore, the question of whether a strong, robust, and athletic child will be more competitive in China in the future has prompted parents to think. In Yiming's story, he ended by telling me that he wants to continue playing ice hockey and try to play for China one day. Ice hockey in China has been developing rapidly over the past few years and he would like to be part of the Chinese hockey team if he has the chance. Yiming's ideas exemplify the concept of beings and becomings. It is necessary to include becoming in consideration of children as social actors because how children view themselves and the world they live in affects their current decisions (Uprichard, 2008). In this study, Yiming thought about his possible future career through his love for hockey and his knowledge of the Chinese hockey scene. As a result, Yiming's plans for his future career have influenced his current life choices to continue his love of hockey and improve his field hockey game in his life.

### 6.3.2 Less parental authority

In this research, parents express that their childhood differs from their children's childhood as the parents' authority has declined. For instance, Xiaoya's mother mentioned that the difference between her childhood and her daughter's childhood.

*Yiru: What is the difference between your childhood and your child's childhood?*

*Xiaoya's mother: I think she had a much happier childhood than we did, with rich material conditions, advanced education and unconditional love and support from her parents. When we were young, our parents educated us with strict discipline. We must obey our parents absolutely. My kid's generation is different and has more scientific and reasonable education methods.*

This excerpt reveals that parents are aware of the difference between their childhood and their children's childhood, and they consider that their children have a less strict discipline and richer material conditions. There is no evidence to claim that absolute obedience exists between child and parent in this research, but the parents' authority has declined compared to the last generation. Some parents expressed that they consider filial piety and obedience as the traditional virtue, while it is not the only value for being good children. Most parents of this research expressed that their practice of *guanjiao* is about negotiation with their children.

*Yiru: What will you do if your children do not do as you wish?*



*Nicolas's mother: Oh, it happens a lot. For instance, we had conflicts frequently because he played too many video games. To solve the conflict, I must communicate with him with patience and negotiate the video gaming time with him. For example, if he spends too much time playing video games on school days, he will get the punishment that his spare time will be used for studying or sharing housework. And if he doesn't behave well, his 'game time' will be cancelled. In addition, as a parent, I also need to adjust, trying not to be anxious and irritated. Keeping patience and being peaceful.*

*Yiru: What kind of behavior that you think is not 'well'?*

*Nicolas's mother: There are many, such as not studying hard, spending too much time watching TV and mobile phones, being rude, not following the rules...being disobedient...'*

From this statement, we can see that Nicola's mother tries to make her children understand what is good for them through communication, rather than scolding or yelling at them, as her parents did. Thus, we can see that the concept of obedience still exists between Chinese immigrant parents and children in this study, but it is less strict than in previous generations, and negotiation becomes an important way to reconcile parental authority and child obedience. The purpose of negotiation is to understand each other's ideas and to set a rule that parents and children agree on. If one of them breaks this rule, there is a corresponding punishment. For example, Nicolas and his mother agreed to watch TV every day is leave it; if Nicolas spent too much time watching TV, then his weekend playtime would be replaced by studying. However, from the empirical data, all families find this ideal approach difficult to achieve. All parents expressed that disciplining their children is a long-term process of constant adjustment.

"We are also constantly adjusting our education methods to try to reach an ideal state. Children are very smart, they have their own ideas, and all we parents need to do is to guide them correctly."

(Yiming's father)

This excerpt illustrates that Yiming's father believes that there is not a fixed model for discipline children, but rather that parenting styles should be adapted to different situations and to the child's ideas. Unlike traditional Chinese parents of the past, contemporary Chinese parents take more into account the child's ideas, believing that children have their own agency. Therefore, parents understand that they should not discipline their children in a straightforward manner but guide them properly while respecting their wishes. This change in child rearing is also influenced by the environment in which they now live and their critical reflection on traditional Chinese parenting. The discourse on child rearing in the Norwegian context, as well as critically reflecting on their upbringings, influenced them. In such way, they could adjust their parenting patterns by reducing parental authority.

### 6.3.3 Online extracurricular classes as a tactic to cope with "homework-free" childhood

The online tuition class is one of the tactics of Chinese migrant parents to navigate their concerns on a 'homework-free' childhood. Concerned about falling behind in studies, each family enrolls their children in several online tuition classes. Parents keep an eye on the pace of learning in China so that their children can study after school and maintain the same pace as pupils in China. Children in this study held three attitudes toward online tutorials. Firstly, all participants have been attending these tutorials since they were in China, and they are used to them and have no particular opinion about them. Secondly, as discussed in chapter 5, Xiaoya actively participates in and enjoy the online tuition classes, especially when she has her Chinese friends in the classes. Such experiences give them the opportunity to find a sense of belonging from their friends. Meanwhile, some participants argue that the online tuition classes interfere with their time outdoors or playing video games, especially when they learn that their Norwegian classmates do not have to attend the online tuition classes. As shown in Figure 8, Yiming completed this sentence as "I wish *no after school*" and "I am afraid of *more school*", which reveals his dissatisfaction with online tuition classes.

Sentence completion 句子补充	😊	○	◎	⊘	♥
	I am good at...	I am proud of...	I wish...	I am afraid of...	My favorite...
	我擅长	我自豪	我希望	我害怕	我最爱
	<u>League of Legend</u>	<u>Gaming</u>	<u>No more after school</u>	<u>I don't know</u>	<u>Icehockey</u>
	<u>Gaming</u>	<u>Icehockey</u>		<u>More school</u>	<u>Computer</u>
	<u>Icehockey</u>				

**Figure 8: The sentence completion chart, completed by Yiming**

Meanwhile, Yiming rejected online tutorials by passing some judgments on his parents. When Yiming and his parents argued about online tutoring classes, he would tell them that a good parent should not make their children do things they do not want to do, such as online tutoring classes. Judging parents according to the concept of good parenting in Norwegian discourse suggests that children exercise discursive agency over parental

discipline. Discursive agency is formed by the process of stakeholders creating a position for themselves through the use of language and adopting certain approaches, and supporting their position and associated political truths (Lang et al., 2019, p. 416). In Yiming's case, he practiced his discursive agency by positioning himself and his parents in Norwegian discourse and positioning his parents as parents who need to conform to the principles of being a good parent in a Norwegian context. He understood that parents usually do not want to be bad mothers/fathers, regardless of the context. He cited the school's advice that parents should encourage their children to get outdoors and away from the health risks of being sedentary, further telling his parents that as good parents in the Norwegian context, they should not confine their children to indoor, online extracurricular classes. In the process, he used the discursive agency to understand his current situation and to help himself find the best position and solution to reach his purpose of reducing or not attending extracurricular classes.

## 6.4 Summary

The analysis chapter is drawn from the experiences and feelings of Chinese migrant children and parents about childhood and child rearing in Norway. First, the chapter describes how a childhood of "love of nature and the outdoors and free play" in Norway was shaped through global child discourse, policy, and culture, and how the participants perceived Norwegian childhood. Second, I describe how an "obedient and studious" discourse within Chinese childhood influenced the participants' daily lives. I then analyze the tensions between Norwegian and Chinese childhoods that caused anxiety among the participants' parents. Finally, I analyze how the participants' parents found harmony in this tension by accepting the Norwegian childhood, reducing parental authority, and enrolling their children in extracurricular classes.

# 7 Conclusion

## 7.1 A journey of exposing myself to Norwegian culture

My motivation for carrying out this research project originates from my own experience. I came to Norway in 2020 to study the master's program in Childhood Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. It was at a time when the Coronavirus was prevalent all around the world. There was a certain social distance between people, and I did not speak much Norwegian, which made me feel that there was a wall between Norwegian society and me. Such situation made it difficult for me to engage properly with Norwegian society and culture. This invisible wall made me feel a sense of exclusion and loneliness. From my work experience and study background, I was very sensitive to children's experiences, and I could not help but think about children who had the experience of migrating from China to Norway. How do they view their lives and experience? And do they have the same feelings as me? Nevertheless, I think it is more important to let them tell me what they really think as maybe they do not necessarily feel lonely like me? Thus, I designed my research focus on Chinese children who were born and lived in China for a while and then moved to Norway. After taking courses in the childhood studies program, I found that the literature on migrant children as a group is limited, that they often appear in studies of forced mobility, and that their image is often defined as "passive," "dependent" and "victims". There is very little literature that examines children from their own perspectives and experiences, so I wanted to contribute to filling the gaps. It was interesting to explore these questions as I was also on the journey of experiencing myself to Norwegian culture.

I wanted to understand the children's stories from their own perspectives, supplemented by some parental quotes as appropriate. Thus, I set my first two research questions to know children's migration experience and post-migration everyday lives: how do transnational migrant Chinese children view their transnational migration experience? How do transnational migrant Chinese children experience their relationship with parents, peers, teachers and relatives? The third question also relates to what I observed in the literature. I found a large body of research that only mentions the lives of immigrant children in the countries to which they immigrated, with little mention of their countries of origin and cross-border family ties that also influence them. Especially in contemporary society, geographical distances have become less obvious because of technology. The first-generation migrant children are placed in a social space of transnational migration, where they can feel the differences between the two cultures more straightforward. In this sense, I could explore the understanding and attitude of (a) good child/children in both societies from the perspective of children and their parents. Therefore, my third question is how do transnational migrant Chinese children and their parents view Chinese childhood and Norwegian childhood, as well as how do the participants navigate these different childhood ideals?

To explore these three questions, I conducted a qualitative study of semi-structured interviews and several task-based activities to gather data. I explored the answers to the first two questions in the first analysis chapter. First, I found that children are not only care receivers in transnational family migration but also caregivers, interpreters and

language teachers for their parents. Second, they play an important role in maintaining the family connection with their extended family and friends in China. Third, they directly or indirectly help their parents to integrate into Norway. Moreover, children faced several challenges during the adaptation process. I found that they felt a sense of exclusion because of language, food habits and cultural identity. It is noted in this study that the understanding of agency is more critical, contextual and relational. Agency should not be overly idealized, and agency is not something that children have, while it varies depending on location, time, and the people around the agent. Children of this study exercised their discursive agency to position themselves in a specific discourse, to navigate what was happening around them and to find the best decisions for themselves. For example, they find ways to fit into a new environment and finding a place where they could have a sense of belonging in a transnational context. With a more critical, contextual and relational understanding of agency, I put forward that although most of the children in my study could cope with these challenges in their own way, I would like to see the challenges they face receive the attention of parents, schools and society. For example, not only providing them with opportunities to learn Norwegian but also understanding the psychological burden of language learning.

I explored the third question in the second analytical chapter. First, I present the tensions between Norwegian and Chinese childhood based on the views and interpretations of children and their parents. In the Norwegian context, the love of nature and outdoor life are emphasized, and children are encouraged to enjoy outdoor life and explore nature. Parents are also expected to help their children become active in the outdoors. However, under the one-child policy, a new generation of Chinese children is portrayed in roles that require protection and hope for their families. Few Chinese parents are willing to put their children in "dangerous" outdoor life. Second, the Norwegian duty-free and homework-free childhood has led to a certain degree of parental anxiety, whereas Chinese children tend to experience obeying elders and studying hard as a duty. The Chinese migrant parents try to reconcile these differences and search for harmony among different ideas on a 'good' childhood. First, they accept the Norwegian childhood by actively supporting their children's participation in outdoor life and sports activities, not only because it creates opportunities for the children to integrate into Norwegian society, but also because they believe that it gives the children a healthy body and resilience quality. Second, they negotiate to reconcile conflicts between their children and themselves, thereby they change in child rearing ideals by reducing parental authority. Third, they respond to a "homework-free" childhood by enrolling their children in online extracurricular classes and trying to maintain the same learning pace as Chinese children.

My research findings connect to two fundamental ideas in the field of childhood studies, which are children are active actors and that childhood is socially constructed. First, children navigate their lives as active actors in the migration and adaptation process, breaking the stereotype that children are dependent and caregivers. Second, different cultures have different ideas about childhood and child rearing, and this is not a right or wrong debate. Combining the fields of transnational migration and childhood studies provides a good look at the collision of different cultural ideas about childhood and child rearing, and how people perceive, respond and exercise agency to transform the context.

## 7.2 Strength, limitations and suggestions

One of the strengths of my study is the combination of a transnational perspective and a childhood studies perspective, providing a perspective on understanding childhood and child rearing with different cultural knowledge. The Chinese migrant parents in this study had views on pen-rearing and cage-free-rearing. They believed that Norwegian child rearing is more like cage-free-rearing, while traditional Chinese child rearing is more like pen-rearing (chapter 6). They negotiated diverse and even conflicting values, based on their own perceptions of Norwegian good childhood and the Chinese good childhood. This negotiation occurs in response to an uncertain future environment, and they want to give their children good support to adapt to the various situations they may encounter in the future. It provides an interesting look at immigrants' views on Norwegian child rearing, offering a perspective on things that may be taken for granted by the natives.

An additional strength of this study is a critical, contextual, and relational understanding on children's agency. The universal, right-based discourses and agency-centered studies tend to recognize children as competent and independent by assuming they have agency and power to control their lives. This study does not presuppose that children have agency to navigate and make decisions about their lives, but rather observes the emergence of children's agency in specific contexts or relations with those around them. This study found that children exercise their discursive agency based on their understanding or perception of their position in certain discourses and make decisions for themselves to support their position. For example, they position themselves and their parents in a Norwegian context, countering their parents' demands that they attend too many online tutoring sessions on the grounds that 'good' parents in a Norwegian context should keep their children actively engaged in outdoor activities. Thus, this could inspire future research studies on children to look more critically at children's agency rather than presupposing that children have agency and over-idealizing children's agency.

Meanwhile, we should also consider the empirical results in the light of some limitations. First, the sample size of this study is small. The size of the sample affects the representativeness of the population. However, the small sample size gave me the opportunity to go into depth and gave me a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the participants in the study. Therefore, although this study is not representative of the entire population of Chinese migrant children in Norway, it can serve as a possible opportunity for others to hear the voices of Chinese migrant children and their parents. It is important to clarify that this study focuses on children born in China who lived there for a period before moving to Norway, a smaller group compared to second and third-generation immigrant children. The number of first-generation immigrant children in Norway is also smaller than in other immigrant destination countries such as the United States and Canada. However, the number of migrant children in Norway is increasing every year, and the challenges they face in adapting and their voices in their own lives deserve our attention.

Second, the sample in this study lacks diversity. Participants in this study come from middle-class Chinese families with elite parents who are generally highly educated. Thus, parents' attitudes toward child rearing are not representative of the entire group of Chinese migrant families. Future research could focus on the attitudes of different classes of migrant Chinese family toward childhood and child rearing

Third, this study has a relatively broad scope and approach, focusing on participants' experiences of migration and daily life, including their perceptions of family, school, and

social life. The thesis did focus specifically on specific issues such as language, food, and cultural identity that influence participants' everyday lives, but the focus was broad and not explored in depth. Thus, future research could focus on a specific aspect of children's migration experience, such as the meaning of food or parental anxiety about academic performance.

I would like to give some suggestions in the hope of giving my participants some support from the government, schools and parents. I have emphasized in my research that the participants had a certain ability to apply strategies to solve problems in adjusting to their new environment. They were also active in helping their parents, who were also immigrants. However, it should not be overlooked that they, as children, deserve to receive the same rights as local children in the best interests of the child, protection, education and participation. Therefore, the government should pay attention to this. As mentioned in the study, the right to the involvement of children is now widely noted in Norway, while the actual situation of migrant children needs to be taken into account. Thus, I call for more actions to listen to and understand children's and parents' experiences more in-depth (based on qualitative studies like this) help create more effective measures to secure equal access to education and participation.

Second, schools can help migrant children adapt to the local language and life as much as possible. This study found that participants commonly experience language challenges during the adaptation process. Thus, school can provide migrant children with appropriate language programs and teachers who can communicate in their native language to help them understand the content according to children's need. This study also found that during the adaptation process, children develop some feelings of exclusion, differentiating between native students and children with similar immigrant backgrounds to themselves, and seeing themselves as 'foreigners'. School is an important arena for children to socialize with peers, so it is necessary to build bridges between migrant and local children. For example, through multicultural-themed activities, school can help children learn about each other's backgrounds and build friendships. Teachers are expected to have an understanding of different cultures and to help immigrant children adjust to school life, and to help immigrant and native children get to know each other and build friendships.

Parents are important members of the children's lives and should communicate with them about their daily experiences and feelings at school to help them adjust in a timely manner. It is also important to create opportunities for children to integrate into the community as much as possible, such as by taking them to sports and community events. Parents should also communicate with their children about the pressure of schoolwork and the need for reasonable and appropriate scheduling of extracurricular classes. Overall, a good family atmosphere can bring positive energy to children and is a source of strength and support for them to cope with difficulties.

Overall, I am very grateful for the experience of doing research on children's transnational migration experience from China to Norway. Looking back on my own experience of integrating into Norwegian life, I think migrant children have the right to have their voices heard by a wider audience, and that my research was only fortunate to be able to provide some help.

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# 9 Appendix

## 9.1 Recruitment poster – the average version

Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences  
Norwegian Loholt alle 83-85  
Pavilion A/B  
Dragvoll campus  
[kontakt@ipl.ntnu.no](mailto:kontakt@ipl.ntnu.no)

**NTNU**  
Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology

Yiru Wang  
Mphil Student  
Norwegian University of Science and Technology

**招募毕业论文研究参与者**

大家好，我是挪威科技大学，童年哲学研究的在读硕士生，在此为毕业论文招募研究参与者。

此研究是基于童年研究的方法，强调从**儿童的视角**出发，深入了解随家庭迁移到挪威生活的儿童的经历和生活。其中主要的研究方式是访谈和叙事。如果您：

1. 对我的研究感兴趣；
2. 年龄在 6-18 岁之间随家庭迁移到挪威生活的儿童及儿童的父母；

非常欢迎您联系我！

研究形式：访谈、叙事、绘画等儿童友好型研究方法

研究时间：2021 年 9 月-12 月期间，至少参与 1 天

此研究已向挪威社会科学资料服务中心申报 (<http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>)并获批准，该中心致力于规范研究伦理和隐私保护。本研究将恪守科研伦理原则，并对儿童的信息保护予以特别关注，参与者的所有信息包括姓名、声音、可识别身份的照片等都将进行严格的保密。

我的联系方式是：微信号 18782932939 或者邮箱 [yiruw@stud.ntnu.no](mailto:yiruw@stud.ntnu.no).具体研究细节会后告知，期待您的联络，谢谢！



扫一扫上面的二维码图案，加我微信



9.2 Recruitment poster – The friendly version poster for people with literacy or reading limitations



### 9.3 Information letter and consent form for parents (English)

## **Are you interested in taking part in the research project “A multi-method study of the everyday lives of migrant Chinese children in Norway”?**

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to know everyday lives of migrant Chinese children in Norway. In this letter I will give you information about the purpose of the project and what you and your children's participation will involve.

#### **Purpose of the project**

Hi, my name is Yiru Wang, a master student from Norwegian University of Science and Technology. I study in the Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies. The purpose of this project is to gain a greater understanding of the everyday lives in Norway of migrant Chinese children. The project will focus on children's experience of moving with their family to Norway from China, children's negotiation of their everyday life in Norway, the different expectations on children and childhood between China and Norway. This project will be solely used for my master thesis.

#### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

#### **Why are you being asked to participate?**

You have received this information letter because you are parents of children who migrated to Norway with family from China.

#### **What does participation involve for you?**

This research is based on childhood studies, which emphasizes small samples and in-depth research from the perspective of children. The main research methods are interviews and narratives. To have a deep understanding of children, it is necessary to listen to parents' or the caretakers' views. The interview with parents will involve questions about your experience of moving to Norway and your family life here.

#### **Participation is voluntary**

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to give consent on participating this project, you need to sign your name in the consent form. You can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw. All information about you will then be deleted.

#### **Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data**

Only I will have access to your data. I will only use your personal data for the purposes specified in this information letter. During this research, I will write down some notes every day. I will use a sound recorder for the interview. Both written and audio information will be handled carefully. Any names or personal identifiable information concerning you or people

you talk about (e.g., your spouse or children) will not be included in the transcription. The anonymity is one of great concern in this project. The name of participants will be replaced so no one will know your identity. I will ask you to show me your photos on your own devices when we talk, but I will not ask to collect a copy of these if they show identifiable people.

### **What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?**

The project is scheduled to end 18.05.2022. By that time, all personal data, including any audio recordings, will be deleted and not recoverable.

### **Your rights**

So long as you or your child can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

### **What gives us the right to process your personal data?**

I will process you and your children's personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with Norwegian University of Technology and Science, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

### **Where can I find out more?**

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- me via email [yiruw@stud.ntnu.no](mailto:yiruw@stud.ntnu.no) or via WeChat 18782932939
- Norwegian University of Science and Technology via my supervisor: Linn Cathrin Lorgen, by email [linn.c.lorgen@ntnu.no](mailto:linn.c.lorgen@ntnu.no)
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Yiru Wang

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## **Consent form**

I have received and understood information about the project *A multi-method study of the everyday lives of migrant Chinese children in Norway* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent to me participate in an interview. I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. [18.05.2022]

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(Signed by participant, date)

## 9.4 Information letter and consent form for parents (Mandarin Chinese)

### 研究知情同意书

亲爱的家长，

您好！

我叫汪怡茹，是挪威科技大学童年哲学研究的在读硕士。在此希望您同意您和您的孩子参与我的一个研究，研究结果将作为我的硕士论文发表。研究主题是《对从中国迁移到挪威的儿童每日生活的深入了解和探讨》。从2021年6月到2022年5月，我会在我的导师琳·凯瑟琳·罗恩（Linn Cathrin Lorgen）的协助下完成我的研究生项目。在此期间，我会在挪威与至少五个迁移家庭进行田野研究。

我的研究基于童年研究的方法，强调从儿童视角出发，进行小样本且深入的研究。其中主要的研究方式是访谈和叙事。本研究旨在了解儿童对迁移的感受、了解不同社会背景下的童年以及儿童对亲子关系、师生关系、同伴关系的看法。有关在挪威的中国移民儿童及家庭的研究目前较少，以儿童为中心的研究更是寥寥无几，而我的研究将尽力填补这一块的空白，我也将致力于为中国移民儿童及移民家庭发声。

在本研究中，我希望与孩子和家长相处，以孩子为主要研究对象，孩子在自己及其家长都同意的前提下参与本研究。我将和家长进行访谈，以便更加深入的了解儿童。除了每天的研究日记，我会在访谈对话时使用录音机。所有文字和语音资料予以保密，在研究报告以及任何文字或口头陈述中，孩子和学校名字会用化名表示，以确保孩子的信息不外传。我将恪守科研伦理原则，并对孩子的信息保护予以特别关注。这个研究已向挪威社会科学资料服务中心申报 (<http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>) 并获批准，该中心致力于规范研究伦理和隐私保护。

一旦孩子及其家庭加入研究，所有信息将以化名方式保存。研究报告将以英文专题论文的形式呈现，并且我将为对研究报告感兴趣的家长提供一份中文版的摘要，请需要的家长在此同意书结尾处提供邮寄地址，我将在大约一年后寄出报告摘要。

为使研究顺利进行，我向各位家长提供这份知情同意书，并希望家长能签署同意。但是，在是否让孩子参加研究这一点上，家长是完全自愿的，并且家长有权在任何时候让孩子退出研究。同时，我会向孩子解释这一研究，在孩子也愿意的情况下才让其参与研究。

最后，非常感谢您耐心地读完这一封信，同时也非常感谢您对我的项目的兴趣。如果有任何我没有解释清楚的地方，或您有其他的问题，您可以通过我的邮箱 [yiruw@stud.ntnu.no](mailto:yiruw@stud.ntnu.no) 联系我。您也可以通过微信联系，我号码是 18782932939。我将非常乐意为您解答任何疑问。

您诚挚的，

汪怡茹

# 同意书

我收到并了解了关于《对从中国迁移到挪威的儿童每日生活的深入了解和探讨》项目的信息，并有机会提出问题。我同意参加研究访谈。我同意在研究结束日期 [18. 05. 2022]前分析处理有关我的数据。

家长姓名:

家长签名:

## 9.5 Information letter and consent form for children (English)

### **Are you interested in taking part in the research project**

#### ***“A multi-method study of the everyday lives of migrant Chinese children in Norway” ?***

This is an invitation to be a part of a research project called A multi-method study of the everyday lives of migrant Chinese children in Norway. In this letter I will explain what the research is about, and what we will do if you decide to participate.

#### **Purpose of the project**

Hi, my name is Yiru Wang, a student from Norwegian University of Science and Technology. I study in the Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies. The purpose of this project is to gain a greater understanding of the everyday lives of children moving with family to Norway from China. I will ask you some questions about what it was like to move to Norway, and about your everyday life here in school and at home. This project will only be used for my master thesis.

#### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

#### **Why are you being asked to participate?**

You have received this information letter because you are between the age of 6-18 and have moved to Norway with your family from China.

#### **What does participation involve for you?**

If you would like to take part in the research project, you can help me by sharing a little about your experience of moving to Norway with family from China. I would like you to participate in an interview. In this interview, I will ask you some questions about your everyday life experience, both at home and school. Before the interview, to get to know you better, I would like to do some activities like drawing, photo sharing, sentence completion and neighborhood walk with you. In addition, I would also like to talk with your parents about your life at school and home.

#### **Participation is voluntary**

Participation in the project is voluntary. Children who are under the age of 15 need to be given consent by their parents, and children who are above 15 will give the consent by signing their own names. You can change your mind and withdraw at any time, even if your parents have given their consent to your participation. There will be no bad consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw. All information about you will then be deleted.

#### **Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data**

Only I will have access to your data. I will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. During this research, I will write down some notes every day and I will use a sound recorder for the interview. Your name will be replaced so no one

will know your identity during the research. I will ask you to show me your photos on your own devices when we talk, but I will not ask to collect a copy of these if they show identifiable people.

### **What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?**

The project is scheduled to end 18.05.2022. By that time, all personal data, including any audio recordings, will be deleted and not recoverable.

### **Your rights**

So long as you or your child can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

### **What gives us the right to process your personal data?**

I will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with Norwegian University of Technology and Science, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

### **Where can I find out more?**

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- me via email [yiruw@stud.ntnu.no](mailto:yiruw@stud.ntnu.no) or via WeChat 18782932939
- Norwegian University of Science and Technology via my supervisor: Linn Cathrin Lorgen, by email [linn.c.lorgen@ntnu.no](mailto:linn.c.lorgen@ntnu.no)
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Yiru Wang

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## **Consent form**

I have received and understood information about the project *A multi-method study of the everyday lives of migrant Chinese children in Norway* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent to participate in the activities described above (drawing, photo sharing and neighbourhood walk) and the research interview. I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. [18.05.2022]

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(Signed by participant, date)

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(Signed by parent/guardian (applies to children below the age of 15, where parental consent is required), date)



## 9.6 Information letter and consent form for children (Mandarin Chinese)

### 研究知情同意书

亲爱的参与者：

你好！

我叫汪怡茹，我是一名来自挪威科技大学儿童研究中心的研究生。

我想邀请你加入我的一个研究，研究主题是《对从中国迁移到挪威的儿童每日生活的深入了解和探讨》。这个研究想弄清楚一些问题：对于你来说，从中国搬到挪威的经历和感受是什么？你在挪威的家庭和学校生活是什么样的？你和朋友，老师，家人是如何相处的？我认为关于这些问题，是围绕着你们发生的，我应该了解你们的看法。除此之外，我也会和大人交谈，了解一下他们的看法是什么。

如果你愿意加入这个研究，那么你要做的就是在我有疑问的时候，帮助我理解你每天发生的不同的事。比如说，你可以告诉我你认为从中国搬到挪威给你生活带来了哪些改变；你还可以告诉我你喜欢的在学校做什么以及为什么。我们会做一些活动，例如绘画、照片分享、散步等，这些活动可以帮助我更好的了解你。在研究后期，我会与你进行一些非正式的访谈或对话。除了记录下我看到的東西和想法，我会在访谈时使用录音机。我会将所有文字和语音资料保密，不用担心你告诉我的内容会被除我以外的任何一个人知道，其中包括你的家长和老师。

我问过你的父母是否可以让你参加研究，他们同意了。但是如果你不愿意参与，那么你可以选择拒绝。另外，如果你在同意参与研究后，又改变了主意，那么你可以随时退出。关于这个研究，如果你有任何问题，欢迎向我提问。

如果你愿意参与研究，请在下面写下你的名字。你和你父母会拿到这份知情同意书的复印件，请保管好它。

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### 同意书

我收到并了解了关于《对从中国迁移到挪威的儿童每日生活的深入了解和探讨》项目的信息，并有机会提出问题。我同意参加上述活动（绘画、照片分享和邻里散步）和做研究访谈。我同意在研究结束日期 [18. 05. 2022] 前分析处理有关我的数据。

孩子姓名：

孩子签名/监护人签名：

## 9.7 Interview guide for children

### **Interview guide for children**

Hi, my name is Yiru Wang. I am a master student who study Childhood Studies at NTNU. My project title is ‘A multi-method study of the everyday lives of migrant Chinese children in Norway’. In this interview, I hope to learn more from your knowledge about your everyday life experience, both at home and in the school. I will use a sound recorder during the interview, and I will show you how it works now. During the interview, feel free to ask me questions and further explanations. You can stop the interview whenever you want without any negative consequences.

### **General questions**

Can you tell me a little about yourself? How old are you?

When did you move to Norway?

What are your hobbies?

What would you like to do when you are free?

### **Family life experience**

Can you tell me a little about your family?

How many people are there in your family? -who are they?

Who takes care of you the most at home?

How would you describe your relationship to your parents(mother/father)?

Do you often talk with your parents? -in which language? (Norwegian/English/

Mandarin/Cantonese) -what kind of topic do you often talk about it?

How did you feel about moving to Norway? - how is life here different or similar to live in China?

Did the family moving to Norway change anything in your life? -what was hard and what was good to adapt? -if it was hard, what do you think adults (parents/teachers/government) can do for you?

Have you talked about your feelings of moving to Norway with your parents? -what do you want your parents do to help you?

Do you help your parents at home? -what do you do to help out? -beyond housework, what else do you do to help out your parents?

Do you get pocket money from helping out? -if yes, how do you spend it?

### **School life experience**

Can you tell me a little about your school life? -what is school like for you?

Can you tell me about your friends at school? -how you get to know each other? -what do you and your friends do when you are (not) at school?

Did your friend(s) also move from other country?

How do you feel about having friends who are (not) migrant/immigrant children? What’s your favorite subject in school? Why?

Can you tell me about (your relationship with) the teachers at school?

Can you tell me about a happy moment in school? Can you tell me about an unhappy moment in school?

## **Expectations**

What does it mean to be a good son/daughter? -is this different or the same in China and Norway?

What do you think is proper behavior for children? -Could you give me some examples? - what you can and cannot do that are different or similar in China and Norway?

What do you think your parents expect from you?

## **Ending questions**

If you could choose three words to describe your life, which would you choose? Would you explain the words to me?

Is there anything you want to add?

Do you have any questions for me?

## 9.8 Interview guide for parents

### **Interview guide for parents**

Hi, my name is Yiru Wang. I am a current master student who studying Childhood Studies at NTNU. My project title is “A multi-method study of the everyday lives of migrant Chinese children in Norway”. The purpose of this project is to gain a greater understanding or the impact of transnational migration on children. In this interview, I hope to learn more from your experience moving from China to Norway and your knowledge about Chinese child-parent relationship. I will use a sound recorder during the interview, and I will show you how it works now. During the interview, feel free to ask me questions and further explanations. You can stop the interview whenever you want without any negative consequences.

### **Situation of the family**

1. Can you start by telling me a little about your family? 2. How many children do you have?
3. Do you have a division of family work?
4. How would you describe a typical day?
5. Have the children expressed any emotions about family migration? -and what did you think about this?

### **General perceptions**

1. In your opinion, what are the differences between your childhood and your children’ childhood?
2. In your opinion, what does a good/bad parent mean? -and is this different or the same in China and Norway?
3. In your opinion, what does a proper/wrong childhood mean? -and is this different or the same in China and Norway?
4. What’s your opinion on raising children in Norway? -Are there any differences between Norway and China?
5. Do you encounter any challenge in your daily life with children? If so, how did you experience it and how did you deal with it?
6. What you think about Norwegian education system? -Are there differences between Norway and China?
7. Do you have expectations on your children?
8. What will you do if your children do not do as you wish?

### **Ending questions**

1. If you could choose three words, how would you describe your everyday life with the children?
2. Is there anything you want to add?
3. Do you have any question for me?

9.9 Activity drawing

我在中国的生活	我在挪威的生活
My life in China	My life in Norway

# 9.10 Activity sentence completion

## 句子补充



I am good at...

我擅长

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I am proud of...

我自豪

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I wish...

我希望

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I am afraid of...

我害怕

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My favorite...

我最爱

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