

# Chapter 1

## Contested Childhoods: Growing up in Migrancy

Marie Louise Seeberg and Elżbieta M. Goździak

### Changed Realities Require New Conceptual Tools

**Marie Louise:** I was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1963. When I was growing up, having a foreign parent was an individual thing, not part of a political issue. My mother was foreign. She did all she could to assimilate, but she was still different. However, there was no specific, politicized, ready-made category for people like her, or people like us except perhaps the “foreigner” or (in my case) “half-foreigner” category. “Immigrants” had not been invented yet, let alone “migrants.” Had I been born in the 1990s instead of the 1960s, this would have been very different. From 1997, “the immigrant population” was a category in Statistics Norway’s main publication, the Statistical Yearbook. I would have been “from an immigrant background” in the widest definition of the category, that of having “one foreign-born parent.” I might have been targeted for tuition in courses for Norwegian as a second language, and my school would then have received “extra resources” for having been able to count me as “a pupil from an immigrant background.” This hypothetical, alternative autobiography illustrates a change that has taken place all over the world. People are on the move and, increasingly, children are growing up where their parents did not. The change has been summed up in sweeping terms such as “globalization” and a “new paradigm of mobility.”

**Elżbieta:** The change takes different forms in different parts of the world. I come from Poland, but when I sought refuge in the United States in the early 1980s, I was

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immediately called “New American.” I did not like this label at first, as my Polish identity was still very strong, but I learnt to appreciate it as my migration journey unfolded. I took my oath to become a U.S. citizen in 1998 in front of an African American judge alongside 97 other New Americans representing several dozen countries of origin. My daughter, Marta, is a Washington DC-native, holds dual citizenship, and knows no Polish, but speaks fluent Spanish with an Argentine accent. Despite having a foreign-born mother, she has never been perceived as an immigrant by mainstream society. She is a second-generation U.S. citizen. The Latino children she teaches in an inner city school in Austin, Texas call her *gringa* (foreigner), but are proud that their teacher—although not a Latina—speaks Spanish. Despite the fact that, like Marta, many of them were born in the United States, they are often thought of as immigrants. Birthright citizenship accords both Marta and her students U.S. citizenship at birth regardless of the immigration status of their parents, but white privilege protects Marta from being labelled an immigrant while her students of colour, unfortunately, continue to be “othered” no matter their place of birth.

In this book, we are not so much interested in finding one word that grasps the *zeitgeist*—such as “globalization” or “mobility”—as we are in paying closer attention to some aspects of larger contemporary processes. We are especially interested in changing ideas and practices of childhood as part of such on-going developments, and propose the twin concepts of “contested childhoods” and “growing up in migrancy” as tools for the investigation of these specific aspects. We are also interested in how public policies affect these concepts and how contesting these notions may lead to significant policy changes.

In order to be able to speak about “twin concepts”, there must be a close resemblance or at least a close relationship between the two concepts. We hope to convince the reader that this is indeed the case and that the concepts are close enough to belong together, yet different enough to be complementary. Twins, of course, also come from the same womb while “contested childhoods” and “growing up in migrancy” have separate origins. When we have decided to bring them together, it is because children are as much part of migration as adults are, and the time has come to explore the connections between two traditionally separate fields of study.

Childhood studies and migration studies meet in research on children who form part of migration processes. In the field of childhood studies, the significance of migration and of migrancy as defining elements in children’s lives is often absent. Similarly, the field of migration studies has only to a limited extent taken on board insights from childhood studies. Although migration scholars often write about children and adolescents, especially using the label “second generation”, they less frequently contest the appropriateness of using the Western framework of an idealized “normal” childhood to frame experiences of all minors, regardless of

background and belonging. Conversely, childhood scholars often include ethnically and racially diverse groups of children and adolescents in their scholarship and writing without fully recognizing the implications of migration and migrancy on the minors. As we shall see, there are notable exceptions to this dichotomized picture, especially among migration scholars with training in anthropology and childhood scholars with training in geography or anthropology.

This book is part of a contemporary development where several endeavours are being made, from different empirical and theoretical points of departure, to build a new, synthesized field on a platform that combines the two previously separate research agendas. Some of this work is ongoing, while other studies have already been published and inform our own work in various ways. In the following sections of this introductory chapter, we present some studies and thoughts that we have found especially valuable in developing the perspectives of this book. We first present approaches to migration as developed primarily in childhood studies and then approaches to research on children within migration studies.

## **Childhood Studies and Approaches to Migration**

Meanings, values and practices related to childhood vary and are constitutive of different social and cultural groups—groups that may form minorities or majorities within national states, as well as transnational or diasporic networks. As migration scholars, we bring different conceptualisations of childhood to centre stage in migration contexts by recognizing the multiplicity of childhoods with all of their complexities. We acknowledge the constant evolution the concept is undergoing (James et al. 1998; Wells 2009) in complex and changing environments (Castles 2010; Morin 2008). This means that “children are active, creative social agents who produce their own unique children’s cultures while simultaneously contributing to the production of adult societies.” At the same time, however, childhood is a structural form, a part of society “that never disappears even though its members change continuously and its nature and conception vary historically” (Corsaro 2011, 3). As society changes, individual childhoods change, leading to changes in childhood as a social, political and cultural category. Conversely, as children’s lives and the category of childhood change, so does society. Certain types of childhood fit into, are shaped by, and shape certain types of society while other types of childhood go with other types of society. This metonymic relationship of childhood and society also forms the dynamic link between childhoods at the ideological, normative level and childhoods at the level of practice.

Common views of childhood as a universally similar, biologically determined phase of human development have been overwhelmingly rejected in childhood studies, building on the seminal insights of Aries (1962). Aries demonstrated that childhood is a social and therefore historically changing category. Key texts such as

*Theorizing Childhood* (James et al. 1998) foregrounded children as agents in changing contexts and laid the foundations for analyses of childhood in terms of structure and agency, identity and difference, change and continuity, the local and the global. Significantly, they describe their own contribution as an epistemological shift from a study of children as primarily “becoming”, with adulthood as the goal of development, to studying children’s “being”, their own experiences of lived childhoods (James et al. 1998, 207–8).

Karen Wells’ work further expands the horizon of childhood studies from still predominantly western-centric preoccupations to the field of globalization. She does not address migration as such, but contributes with valuable analyses of the many connections and intersections of childhood with processes of globalization, migration included. In the book *Childhood in a Global Perspective* (Wells 2009), she shows how children’s lives and adult understandings of childhood interplay across the globe, as part of larger political, legal and economic processes. Especially concerned with the (re)production of inequalities, Wells brings into view how tensions between different understandings of childhood should be understood as dynamics of power where children are simultaneously agents and objects.

In 2013, the journal *Childhood* lent its pages to a special issue bringing the concept of “becoming” back into childhood studies with a new twist: contrasting “becoming” not just to “being” but to a concept of “belonging” regarded as overly and ideologically fixated on stable and localized social units. The issue “Fixity and Fluidity—Circulations, Children, and Childhood” was edited by U.S. anthropologists Stryker and Yngvesson (2013). They used the metaphor of circulation (not synonymous with migration, but partly overlapping) as a way to illuminate childhood as a form of “non-determinative, social becoming”, where children are seen as navigators through unstable social landscapes. This new concept of belonging was worked out in contrast to the prevailing emphasis on children as agents of their own “belonging.” The special issue also highlighted tensions between a child-centred perspective on becoming and the approach of state agents who are authorized to intervene in the lives of children, particularly children who are understood to be displaced, lost, living on the margins, or in some other way “at risk.” Especially valuable is the theoretical advance on a concept of “becoming” which foregrounds the navigations of children and young people in their own lives and helps us view children’s agency as “an interrelation between proper action and the conditions of possibility in the contexts where children navigate” (Leifsen 2013, 309). Such an approach is what we are aiming at by way of exploring the interplay of structure and agency, building on the premise that social structures are historically and spatially specific. In our view, history does not determine agency any more than social structures do. But structures do enable and constrain agency, and neither agency nor structure can be understood independently of their historical and localized context (cf. Danermark et al. 2002).

The multiplicity of contemporary childhoods is demonstrated through the empirical scope of another special issue, this time in the journal *Global Studies of Childhood*, entitled “Children on the Move: The Impact of Involuntary and Voluntary Migration on the Lives of Children.” Edited from Hong Kong and Australia by Lai and Maclean (2011), the issue is quite general in scope and describes the situations and responses of migrant children in many different settings. While five of the six articles focus on the importance of learning and schooling for migrant children, the issue as a whole contributes empirically rather than theoretically, placing itself within the prevalent notions of migrant children as somehow “between” victimhood and agency.

### *Contested Childhoods*

Understanding childhood as a metonymic part of society also implies recognition that how we raise our children, and the choices our children make, do not only shape the future of the children themselves. They also shape the societies in which the children take part and the societies in which they will participate in the future.

The critical reader may well ask who “we” are in this context. Whose children are we talking about? This is where the contestation comes in. Children and young people may be regarded as primarily representing the future of the societies into which they or their parents have migrated, the future of their families, of their societies of origin, or their own present and future lives as autonomous, transnational individuals. Diverging concerns may be reflected in different ideas and practices of childhood and negotiated in different social fields. In the chapters that follow, we address some outcomes of such negotiations in the short and longer term and changes that migration may bring about in how we understand childhood and how childhoods play out in the real world.

Children and childhood play important roles in constituting the nation and are thus symbolically significant to the state. As “childhood is a concept which lies at the intersection of multiple frames of reference and languages” (Ní Laoire et al. 2010, 156), governmental policies as well as societal conceptualizations of childhood are based on ideal images of children and childhood that vary culturally. Different conceptualizations and ideals of childhood thus prevail within different national states, in Europe and beyond, and are closely interrelated with ideas of the family. National populations tend to comply with official understandings of what childhood should be like, while migrants, whatever their countries of origin, are more likely to form families and childhoods discrepant from such official understandings. This leads to emerging contestations and negotiations over childhoods, and a rising feeling of crisis—a “crisis of values”—at the intersection of family and state. Although everyone seems to agree that “children are the future”, there is less consensus on *whose future they are*. A long heralded weakening of the nation-state

paired with the increasing transnational situation of many families makes such questions essential. An increasingly “omniphobic Europe” (Ozkirimli 2012)—connected to economic, cultural or moral crises, to a perceived problematic role of Islam in many migrants’ family lives, and to extensive commercialization of childhood (Rysst 2010)—strengthens the motivation of governments to control family life and childhood not least among migrants. How such motivations play out in practice is an empirical question.

At the most fundamental level, contestations may arise around the question “what is a child?” Currently, as laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in most other legal contexts, the term “children” includes everyone up to the age of eighteen, which means that it also includes adolescents. However, in most other contexts definitions and delimitations of children and of childhood are relative. This is because “hard” criteria, such as biological age or the lawful rights and duties accorded to different age groups are often less important for choices and opportunities than “weak” criteria such as cultural expectations, social relations and structural positioning. Applying flexible definitions of children and childhood in research is supported by the fact that youth is often regarded as a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, thus weakening the rigid dichotomy of “childhood” and “adulthood.” Furthermore, because life phases are defined not only by individual biological age but also relative to each other as social categories of meaning, childhood and youth are closely knit and define each other mutually.

Families, national states, and civil society organisations as well as children themselves are central actors engaged in contesting the many meanings and practices of childhood. Childhoods thus become fields of conceptual, moral and political contestation, where “battles” may range from minor tensions and everyday negotiations of symbolic or practical importance involving a limited number of people, to open conflicts involving violence and law enforcement.

## **Migration Studies and Approaches to Childhood**

Although children have not been entirely neglected in migration studies, the approach to children’s place in migration processes and policies in this field provides a rather different perspective. Partly this is because the field of migration studies is not a consolidated disciplinary field, but comprises the mainstream theoretical and methodological approaches of disciplines from statistics, law, and economics to social geography, cultural anthropology and social psychology. This book has grown out of the qualitative branches of migration studies, but even here, as we have noted above, concepts deriving from the “harder” branches of the field such as “first” and “second” generation immigrants have prevailed. In addition, a significant trait in migration studies, as opposed to childhood studies, is the preoccupation with structure rather than with agency. In combination with a

predominant view of adults as the drivers of migration, this has led to an image of children as dependent and dependants, as victims, or as simply not part of the main picture at all.

In their edited volume *Children and migration: at the crossroads of resiliency and vulnerability* anthropologists Marisa O. Ensor and Elżbieta M. Goździak directed attention to the growing numbers of migrant children (Ensor and Goździak 2010). One of the first books taking the perspective of migrant children themselves, this volume offered a comprehensive analysis of the increasingly common, but poorly understood, phenomenon of children in migratory circumstances. Global in scope, it presented research on migrant children in different circumstances and regions of the world and framed the understanding of their circumstances at the intersection of agency and victimhood. We build on this understanding in the present book, while taking into account the structural frameworks that form the various circumstances described in the different chapters.

A group of contributors to the emerging field of childhood/migration studies focused on children's agency and their experiences of migration, as well as on the concept of belonging. The book *Childhood and migration in Europe: portraits of mobility, identity and belonging in contemporary Ireland* (Ni Laoire et al. 2011), scrutinizes the case of Ireland as a European country of immigration and emigration. This book also emphasises children's subjectivity and agency in constructing identity and belonging. In contrast, our aim is to direct more attention to the interplay of structures, contexts, and relations of power in forming different modes of being, becoming, and belonging.

In a special issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, called "Transnational Migration and Childhood" (White et al. 2011), the same group of scholars challenge adult-centric studies in migration research by focusing on the experiences of children in migratory contexts. This issue also disputes ethno-centric notions of childhood and of child migration, advocating the agency and subjectivity of children as a mode of understanding and of gaining new knowledge about the diverse field of child migration and about the roles children play in their own migration processes. Again, we find this perspective invaluable—indeed, necessary—when combined with insights into structural aspects of both childhood and migration.

In another special issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, anthropologist Katy Gardner brings to the fore the intersection of childhood and migration. The issue, entitled "Transnational Migration and the Study of Children," was published in 2012, just a year after the one just mentioned, demonstrating the growing interest in this burgeoning field. Gardner takes children's agency and the social construction of childhoods as points of departure, and aims to explore the insights the study of children and their experiences may throw on processes of transnational movement, cultural identity, and the dynamics and inequalities of global capitalism. With this aim, the mutual workings of structure and agency are brought together through empirical studies of "transnational children" and their lives.

The book *Child and youth migration. Mobility-in-migration in an era of globalization*, edited by Veale and Donà (2014) picks up several of the threads laid down by preceding work on childhood and migration, and adds the dimension of mobility. This complements the larger picture of children and young people engaged in transnational and global migration by including the many smaller, more short-term and dynamic patterns of movement. Such “mobility-in-migration” includes young people and children who are “left behind” in their parents’ larger migration project and move to their grandparents for a shorter or longer period of time, as well as children who move back and forth between countries during the holidays or at different stages of their education. The book aims to highlight the connections between such mobilities as part of the larger migration patterns. In doing so, it has much in common with the special issue of *Childhood* on the circulation of children, mentioned above (Stryker and Yngvesson 2013), indicating that the two fields of study may be converging.

### ***Growing up in Migrancy***

Where you grow up shapes your experiences, your life chances, your identity, and your personality. We use the phrase “growing up in migrancy” inspired by the classic “Growing up in New Guinea” (Mead 1930/1975). Growing up, Mead says, comprises “The way in which each human infant is transformed into the finished adult, into the complicated individual version of his city and his century” (Mead 1930/1975, 9). Our claim is that increasing numbers of children are growing up, not primarily in a place or a period, but within a social space that we call migrancy. We regard migrancy not simply as the “the state or condition of being a migrant; the existence of a migrant population; migrants as a class or group” (Oxford English Dictionary, cited in Näre 2013). Rather, with Näre (2013, 605), we view migrancy as “the socially constructed subjectivity of ‘migrant’ (...), which is inscribed on certain bodies by the larger society in general and legislative practices in particular. (...) Very often the inscribed subjectivity of migrancy is not only attributed to those who have migrated” but also to children of immigrants, children who have never moved away from their place of birth. “[M]igrancy has become as important a social category as those classics of the modern era: gender, social class, ‘race’ and nationality” (Näre 2013, 605). Migrancy is not only a category, not quite a social field, but perhaps something in between: it may constitute a social space. Increasing numbers and proportions of the world’s children are growing up in this space, even when they are not migrants, but because their parents or even grandparents once were. In the chapters to follow, we bring different conceptualisations of childhood and of migrancy to centre stage in research on migration and on post-migration integration and transnational lives.

Issues regarding childhood and migration have been addressed more indirectly within the IMISCOE research network of which this book, too, is part—especially through studies of the integration of families and of the second generation (e.g.



Grillo 2008; Crul et al. 2012). However, in a migration context we find the concept of “childhood” more fruitful than that of the “second generation.” Often “the first generation” is taken to mean people who are the first of their family to have immigrated, “the second generation” is applied to people who have immigrant parents, and “the third generation” to people whose grandparents were immigrants. However, in some parts of the world the term “second generation” often comprises members of the first as well as the third generation of transnational, ethnic minority or migrant families. Originally a statistical category aimed at counting the proportion of children of immigrants, “second generation” is inaccurate at best, and constitutive of ascribed migrancy and racialization at worst.

Statistical categories are an important basis for policy-making and political discourse, and as such influence the approaches and assumptions underlying analyses. Statistical data on immigration stems from these diverse frameworks and may or may not include statistics on emigration and immigration as well as integration measures. For example, the category “second generation” is applied differently in different national contexts. In Europe, the concept of “second generation immigrant” is widely criticized for ascribing migrancy to people who have not themselves migrated. As Gardner points out, “by describing young people first and foremost as the descendants of immigrants, it racialises them” (Gardner 2012, 900). In the U.S., in contrast, wide use of the term “second generation American” escapes the ascription of migrancy, but not the problem of finding a concept that is refined to fit a reality where the country of birth is not the most significant factor influencing life chances and experiences.

“Childhood” as a social category does not ascribe migrancy to any group or category of people, and it overrides the problem of separating and refining ever-new sub-categories in order to be able to categorize every member of a society who is a migrant or a child or grandchild of an immigrant. “Childhood” spans all of humanity, rather than separating people into “us” and “them” based on geographical origins. That said, like all social categories, “childhood” might itself be an instrument of another kind of “othering”, where adults and children appear to be qualitatively different categories of people, based on differences in age and generation.

To the profound insights from childhood studies, we use the concept of migrancy to add a geographical dimension both directly and indirectly. Directly, we examine transnational families where children are part of more than one geographically located society and experience transnational social fields (Gardner 2012). Indirectly, we explore how migrancy is an attributed characteristic of children and their families whether or not the children themselves have migrated (Näre 2013).

## **Changing Realities, Adaptable Methodologies**

The contributors to this volume represent a wide range of disciplines, including cultural and social anthropology, political science, social psychology, sociology, and geography. In the research that informs the chapters, the authors used several,

mostly qualitative, methodologies, including ethnographic interviews with Sudanese refugee children resettled in the United States, children and adolescents trafficked to the United States, schoolchildren and leaders of youth organizations in Norway, and children born to South Asian and Danish parents in Denmark. Many of these interviews were combined with participant observation and “deep hanging out.” The methodologies also include analysis of media accounts and court documents pertaining to a child welfare case of Roma children as well as close reading of historical and contemporary narratives of refugee children’s experiences. This was combined with analysis of past and present policies towards refugee children in the UK and in Norway, and analysis of life-stories of Vietnamese youth in the Czech Republic.

The methodologies deployed in the different chapters in this book may be described as “ethnography,” yet not necessarily as ethnography in the traditional sense of the word. “When ethnography was first established as a way of researching and writing about other people’s lives,” writes Kirin Narayan, “‘the field’ as a site of research for anthropologists referred to a culturally different and out-of-the-way bounded place. As ideas of which places might appropriately be considered the field has shifted, so too have techniques for fieldwork and modes of representation. Ethnographers now find the field in the familiar and the metropolitan, in archives, markets, corporations, laboratories, media worlds, cyberspace, and more. Moreover, as places are more complexly connected to other places through the intensifying forces of globalization, the field can stretch across networks of sites” (Narayan 2012: 26).

The authors who present their research in the present volume mainly carried out their research in large modern cities. Some, like Marisa O. Ensor, Mari Rysst, Rashmi Singla and Helene Bang Appel, and Marianne Takle and Guro Ødegård focused on one city—Omaha, Nebraska, Oslo, Norway, or Copenhagen, Denmark. Others, like Elzbieta M. Goździak, Andrea Plackova and Eva Janská, and Marie Louise Seeberg carried out multi-sited ethnography. Goździak’s research took her to ten states in the United States and the District of Columbia. Plackova and Janská too ventured to several parts of the Czech Republic, while Seeberg’s research explores four different spatiotemporal sites through the stories of four children, one at each site.

The encounters with the studied populations varied in length and frequency. Some authors were fortunate to interact with the children and adolescents they studied over a longer period and were able to interview them multiple times, while others did not have such opportunities and had to limit their interactions to one interview. Mari Rysst’s field methods included in-depth interviews and what Clifford Geertz calls “deep hanging out” (1998). “Deep hanging out” describes the anthropological research method of immersing oneself in a cultural, group, or social experience on an informal level. Observations gleaned from “deep hanging out” typically end up being the most poignant insights of one’s anthropological research. In contrast to anthropological practices of conducting short interviews with subjects or observing behaviour, “deep hanging out” is a form of participatory observation in which the anthropologist is physically or virtually present in a group for extended

periods of time or for long informal sessions. Rysst had the benefit of “deep hanging out” with a group of children born in Norway to parents hailing from Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Morocco, Somalia, Gambia, Nigeria, Norway, and Vietnam. She spent time with them in classrooms and during recess over a three months period. As she writes in her chapter, “[o]ne of the methodological advantages of long-term participant observation is a good chance of achieving relations based on trust.” The author posits that building rapport with the studied children and developing a considerable level of trust also increased the reliability of data she collected once she conducted more formal interviews.

Marisa O. Ensor interacted with members of the South Sudanese diaspora, both youngsters and adults, through her attendance at a variety of different events, such as academic conferences, social occasions and community celebrations, as well as more informal gatherings of younger South Sudanese and their non-South Sudanese friends. She also conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with youth ranging in age from 14 to 21 years of age. These interviews took place in community centres, cafes and restaurants near participants’ homes in different parts of Omaha, Nebraska. She used an interview guide aimed at eliciting reflections on younger people’s experiences growing up in South Sudan or in exile, the challenges and opportunities of life in the U.S., and their hopes and expectations for their future. She interviewed the majority of her study participants at least two or three times, with interviews lasting for a variable length of time, typically around two hours. Ensor maintained close contact with some of the South Sudanese youngsters and their families, and has had regular updates on their activities and experiences.

Elzbieta M. Goździak began her research by “studying up”—looking at decision-makers, policies, and programmes set up to prevent child trafficking, protect trafficked children, and prosecute perpetrators (Nader 1972; Gusterson 1997). When she initiated her research access to trafficked minors, guarded by their protectors almost as closely as by their traffickers, was impossible. Many service providers contested the value of doing research with trafficked children and adolescents and argued that participation in research would further traumatize victims. She disputed this assumption and underscored the empowerment that could be derived from involvement in research. As she gained the trust of service providers, she was able to meet a few survivors of child trafficking and begin “studying down,”—eliciting stories from survivors of child trafficking—and “sideways,” comparing experiences of various survivors and assistance programmes (Bowman, n.d.; Stryker and Gonzalez 2014). These ethnographic encounters varied in duration and intensity, but rarely allowed for prolonged participant observation of a singular programme or individual survivor. There are no communities of trafficked children and youth (Brennan 2005); many of the study participants lived with foster families and were scattered around the country, often miles away from the locality where they were first rescued. In her chapter, Goździak underscores the fact that research with survivors of child trafficking to the United States is complicated and does not always follow the more traditional ethnographic trajectory. While unable to spend more than two or three days at each programme and just a couple of hours with each survivor, she nevertheless characterizes her study as ethnographic. She travelled to

“the field” to see the programmes in action and participated in or organized working meetings with a variety of case workers, attorneys, and law enforcement representatives working with survivors of child trafficking. She conducted focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews with programme staff, and interviewed many of the survivors in their place of residence, at their worksite, or at the programmes where they were being served. Goździak’s aim was to listen to the trafficked girls and boys in order to present their points of view and convey how the survivors conceptualized their trafficking experiences and their traffickers. She also attempted to explore what they perceived as their most urgent needs, and how these perceptions differed from the conceptualizations and the approaches of the service providers. Case files and court documents, where included, inform and add the narratives of service providers and child advocates whose voices she also wanted to capture.

Marianne Takle and Guro Ødegaard studied and compared the Norwegian government’s criteria for funding to children and youth organisations, and how the ethnic-community based organisations adapted to these criteria. While the discussion of government policies is based on policy document analysis, the authors also visited the organisations’ webpages, Facebook profiles and their written statutes, as well as conducting semi-structured interviews with the leaders of the organisations. They followed an interview guide with questions and topics they wanted to cover and started each interview by asking personal questions about the leaders’ motivations for using their spare time to work for their respective organisations. They then followed up these with questions related to the organisations’ aims, main activities, and the members’ engagement. Each interview was concluded with a question about each the organisation’s future. While they mainly followed the interview guide, other questions were also discussed when they felt it appropriate. Both authors worked together in all the interviews—while one researcher asked the questions, the other transcribed the interview. Unlike many studies where interviews are conducted by research assistants, this provided a valuable familiarity with the material and with the different perspectives represented in the material that would otherwise have been unattainable. This was strengthened by the fact that the authors also took part, as observers, in meetings for youth organisations in Oslo.

In Helene Bang and Rashmi Singla’s chapter about mixedness in a Danish context, the first author conducted all the interviews herself, again providing an irreplaceable closeness to the material. The interviewees were chosen in an interesting “match” with the authors’ own Asian origins, which facilitated empathy and the building of trust between the researchers and the participants. The participants were also selected on the basis of age, building on the premise that young people in the age group 11–18 are both able to reflect verbally on their experiences and emotions and find themselves in a period of life where experiences and emotions are often more intense and significant for identity processes than at any other point in life.

In Andrea Plackova and Eva Janska’s chapter, the empirical basis differs from Bang and Singla’s research, although the thematic focus on identity processes is closely related. Here, the participants’ perspective is more retrospective, with young

people aged 16–29—a later phase of the overlapping stage between childhood and adulthood where individuals are in the process of consolidating identities that for younger people may be more fluid. The interviewing method here was that of “collecting” life histories, or of creating more or less coherent personal narratives out of the experiences, emotions, and reflections of earlier years. Through their analysis of this material, they show how young Czech Vietnamese, or Vietnamese Czech, are—not unlike their Danish Asian or Asian Danish counterparts—creatively navigating amongst stereotypes and ascribed identities.

Both Ada I. Engebriksen and Marie Louise Seeberg relied on secondary data sources. Ada I. Engebriksen used her involvement as an expert witness for the defence in legal cases of Roma children forcibly placed in the foster care. She used her involvement in the lawsuit, analysis of court documents, and media accounts to analyze one of the cases closely. In addition, her previous work and research among the Roma in Oslo, Norway and in a village in Romania gave her a thorough historical understanding of the social and policy contexts as well as of the cultural underpinnings of the case study she writes about in her chapter.

In her chapter, Marie Louise Seeberg uses the stories of four individual children as cases representing each of her four sites of investigation: the boundary crossings of refugee children into Norway and the UK in the 1930s and the 2010s. Although the children are not representative of refugee children at the four sites in any statistical sense of the word, they and their stories are typical for their time and place in the sense that they could only have happened in the way that they did, at these particular points in time and place. In other words, they provide useful points of departure for investigating specific, historical policies and possibilities for refugee children. Rather than basing the chapter on research interviews, Seeberg has delved into autobiographical material published by the children themselves in books and on the internet, as well as examining policies through archival material, media items, and published research. The four case studies are her points of departure for studying the contexts in which the cases are located. Precisely through this creative combination of methods and sources adapted to the matter of investigation, and reflecting the words of Narayan above, they are *ethnographic* case studies in spite of the absence of traditional, first-hand ethnographic research. In this way, she creates a methodological approach to sites where direct access is difficult or impossible, for reasons as different as the disappearance of an older generation and the current vulnerability of asylum seeking children.

## **About This Book: Migrancy and Contestations of Childhood**

As this brief review indicates, childhood and migration studies differ not so much in their empirical foci as they do in their emphases and theoretical base—the lenses used to view the subject matter. While childhood studies during the last few

decades have emphasized the importance and even primacy of children's agency and subjectivity (James and James 2012), migration scholars have predominantly paid attention to structural issues in their search for drivers and consequences of migration (Brettell and Hollifield 2014). Combining the two fields, therefore, also implies finding theoretical approaches that explore the interdependencies of structure and agency. Gardner (2012: 892) suggests that the concept of "social fields" may be useful here, as it directs attention to relationships as sites both of agency and emotions and of hierarchy and power. As suggested above, if we regard the concept of "migrancy" as something between a category and a field, we may direct attention both to the power/resistance of definition and to relationships of agency, emotions, and hierarchy. The childhoods of children growing up in migrancy are contested childhoods.

Presenting material from Europe and America, this book covers a wide geographical area within the global North, and presents quite different childhoods and societies. The United States, Norway, Denmark, the Czech Republic, and the United Kingdom are countries representing diverging engagement with migrant children. The U.S., for example, has always portrayed itself as a country of immigrants whereas a country like the Czech Republic was historically a source of emigrants that now experiences immigration. These countries also represent different levels of formal support for migrant children. At the one end of the spectrum, we have the U.S., which bars legal immigrants from accessing public programs in the first five years upon arrival (an exception is made for refugee families who receive assistance from the federal government and immigrant children who, regardless of their immigration status, have access to public education). At the other extreme, we find welfare states such as the Scandinavian countries, where the independent status of children means that migrant children often have more extensive rights than adults. The chapters to follow thus present cases at each end of the welfare dimension, and show how welfare provisions play directly into the lives of children and young people. The Czech Republic takes a third position. Its recent history as a socialist state forms the backdrop of current conservative-liberalist policies, but is also characterised by historically embedded state structures in a country that is in many ways still in transition.

The overall questions we address are: Which normative assumptions of childhood and migrancy inform societies' efforts to include the children of immigrants and "migrant" children? How do children and young people seek to establish their positions, and how may these efforts interplay or conflict with families' struggles to preserve ethnic heritage and transnational belonging? A related topic, which we also explore, is what kind of changes migration brings to the understandings and practices of childhood in different countries and how these changes impact upon the lived experience of childhood. Conversely, we also examine how local and national understandings and concepts of childhood influence the understanding and definitions of mobile children, and of trafficking and other border crossings undertaken by children (Goździak 2008).

Based on these questions and explorations, the book is structured into three parts. In the first part, we present three chapters that address the questions in

different contexts of international migration. The second part brings together two chapters that describe attempts to establish means of providing governance of childhood in the context of migrancy. The three chapters that form the third part bring to the fore how children may challenge assumptions in their own processes of identity formation.

Human trafficking continues to capture the imagination of the global public. In her chapter, Elżbieta M. Goździak contests the media's gut-wrenching narratives about children sold into servitude. Public discourse emphasizes the particular vulnerability of trafficked children, related to bio-physiological, social, behavioural, and cognitive phases of the maturation process and underscores the necessity to act in the children's best interest. Goździak argues that while trafficked children are overwhelmingly portrayed as hapless victims forced into the trafficking situation, they are usually also actors with a great deal of volition participating in the decision to migrate. She contrasts the image of "the forcibly trafficked child" whose childhood has been lost and needs to be reclaimed with a diversity of experiences and voices that need to be heard in order to facilitate long-term economic and social self-sufficiency of survivors of child trafficking.

Child refugees embody a moral and political dilemma, as national sovereign rights and universal children's rights demand opposite paths of action, argues Marie Louise Seeberg in the following chapter. Child refugees also pose a challenge to current scholarship in childhood studies, refugee and migration studies and studies of nations and nationalism. In each field, important aspects of the experiences and structural conditions forming the lives of child refugees are marginalized. Seeberg asks: Why are some children allowed to cross the boundaries into particular national states, and others denied the right to do so? Which of their multiple statuses—as a child, a refugee, or an asylum seeker—may give them access to different spaces within specific national states? How may child refugees be regarded as different from adult refugees, and how may such differences affect their rights and possibilities? Such questions bring to light the combined underlying premises of nationhood and of childhood, with changing notions of personhood at the very core. This chapter focuses on comparing and analysing the specific criteria for national boundary crossing as they apply to four children: two from the UK, two from Norway. Two crossed national boundaries in the 1930s and two crossed boundaries in the 2010s. Refugee children's access to the physical, social and symbolic spaces of Norway and the UK in the two periods of the 1930s and 2010s indicate a changing pattern of similarities and differences.

In war-torn nations where youngsters constitute the majority of the population, children often play a pivotal role in many of the processes taking place in their societies, both in their country of origin and in the diaspora. This is the point of departure for Marisa O. Ensor's chapter about South Sudanese refugees in the United States. Omaha, Nebraska is currently home to approximately 10,000 South Sudanese refugees, amongst other displaced groups. Mirroring demographic trends in their home country, the South Sudanese population in the U.S. is very young. Some of them came to the U.S. as refugees, as was the case with the close to four thousand famous "Lost Boys of Sudan" who arrived in the U.S. in 2001; others are

the U.S.-born children of refugee parents and have never been anywhere in Africa. Their life experiences have often been quite diverse and disparate depending on their migratory trajectories, among other factors. The categories “child”, “youth”, “refugee”, “migrant”, and “South Sudanese” are similarly quite situational, fluid and contested. This has led to tensions and even violence, with some youth allegedly joining the many street gangs that have recently arisen in the area. Against this background, the diasporic identities and cultural practices of children and youth are being translated, appropriated, and creolized to fit into local social contexts and structures.

In the second part of the book, which focuses on policies and governance, Ada E. Engebriksen describes how after World War II, a group of Roma gypsies settled in Norway, constituting a minority that now comprises a population of around 700 persons. Several of their elders had travelled in Norway between the 1880s and 1930s, but were refused entry to Norway when they sought refuge from Germany in the 1930s. In the 1970s and 1980s, a massive project was launched to integrate the remaining Roma into Norwegian society. Engebriksen explains how this instead led to clientification of the Roma, and social segregation did not decrease. Since 2000, public childcare services have been strongly involved in Norwegian Roma families and approximately five per cent of the children have been taken into custody and raised in foster-families. Foster-families are non-Roma and siblings grow up with little contact with each other and their Roma families, in spite of the fact that Norwegian Roma are granted status as a National Minority under the European Convention for the Protection of Minorities. Under the Convention, they are protected from discrimination and are granted a right to develop their native language and minority culture or heritage. Engebriksen discusses the dilemmas and contradictions between two different protective national regimes—Child Protection laws and the Convention for the Protection of Minorities—and explores how these different protective regimes affect the current meanings and practices of Roma childhoods in Norway.

In the following chapter, Takle and Ødegård scrutinise the identifications and practices of ethnic community based youth organisations in Norway. Although many of their members were born in Norway, the organisations are firmly placed within a migrancy framework by the state’s financial support system and other instruments of governance. Yet, the government’s policy is not to establish these organisations as ethnic enclaves for the perpetuation of homeland cultures; on the contrary, the government regards these organisations as bridges to learning individual democratic participation in society outside the ethnic community. The leaders of the organisations, themselves young people, do not define their task in terms of democracy, but as helping their peers to maintain their families’ and ethnic communities’ cultural heritage. Paradoxically, then, they do not contest the migrancy ascribed to them by the government, but appear to have internalized it, thus perpetuating the status of themselves as “migrants”.

In the third and final part of the book, the authors direct attention to the processes of identity of young people growing up in migrancy. Adolescence is a turbulent time during which many young people reflect on their identities, and identity



development may be particularly challenging for children and young people from a migrant background. Andrea Svobodová's and Eva Janská's chapter focuses on the dynamics of identity formation and the construction of a sense of self among youth of Vietnamese origin in the Czech Republic. The chapter shows how these young people contest ascribed identities and talk about their feelings of belonging while trying to come to terms both with the influences that formed their socialization processes within an immigrant community and with the way of life of the majority society. The authors examine how identities develop over time, what factors influence identity construction, and show how the youth they met were active agents in the process of defining their position "between the two cultures" rather than passively accepting labels—ethnic or others—used by members of the majority.

Globalization has led to an increase in the number of children of mixed parentage, due to more transnational marriages and the formation of intimate relationships across national and ethnic borders. However, European research often overlooks mixed couples and children of mixed parentage. This omission should be viewed in the light of the facts that, historically, children of mixed parentage have been pathologized, and that the term "race" is a taboo in public discourse, probably due to the negative associations with Second World War eugenics (King-O'Riain et al. 2014). Nevertheless, race matters, as hybrid space continues to expand and interconnections across nations result in increasingly international family patterns. In their chapter, Helene Bang Appel and Rashmi Singla deal with ethnicity, race and visible differences between children of mixed parentage and the majority of the Danish population. They investigate how children of mixed parentage construct identities, which are contested in their environments as they challenge the stereotypical notions of belonging and identifying with only one ethnic group. With its point of departure in the history of "mixedness" in Denmark, the chapter provides empirical answers to questions about identity formation among the children who belong to the contested category "children of mixed parentage" and discusses how a new paradigm may be emerging that renders an earlier pathologization of mixed children obsolete.

Mari Rysst's chapter also bears upon silent European discourses of "race" when she discusses identity construction among children living in the Grorud Valley in Oslo. Compared to other parts of Norway, a large proportion of diverse immigrants—visually different from ethnic Norwegians—settled in this valley. Currently, the majority of the residents are of foreign origin. Rysst describes how, as they grow up, they have to navigate between the cultural values from their families' countries of origin and the cultural values of the Norwegian society regarding ethnic/national identity construction. This has implications, she argues, both for their feelings of belonging and for their well-being. The fact that children and youth participate in many social contexts raises high demands on their ability to master complex surroundings. This chapter presents aspects of these processes from the children's point of view, contesting earlier research presuming that youth from migrant background had "one foot in each culture", and that this was problematic. Rather, she takes inspiration from studies that view youth of migrant background as

creative *bricoleurs* and competent navigators of more than one culture, in line with the “new paradigm” of childhood in which children and youth are viewed as active participants in their socialization (James et al. 1998). Rysst discusses how youth living in migrancy in Norway construct national/ethnic identity at the intersection of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality. The chapter shows that youth growing up in diverse cultural settings seek primary identification other than Norwegian identity in a narrow sense. These processes are closely intertwined with gender construction.

In the final chapter, we return to and weave together theoretical and practical implications of the research presented in this volume. We share with the readers our parting thoughts against the backdrop of our personal experiences with conceptualizing and applying some of the themes explored by the book’s contributors. We discuss the implications of these studies for further research, practice, and policy developments. We are optimistic that this book forms a solid foundation for building on the contestations presented in the chapters ahead.

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