Who Are We? Cultural Valence and Children's Narratives of National Identifications

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The article provides a sociological analysis of national identities of Polish children growing up in Norway. The research results presented are unique in the sense that the portrayals of national identifications constructed in the process of migration are shown through direct experiences of children. The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews with children, observation in the research situation (children's rooms) and Sentence Completion Method. Adopting Antonina Kłoskowska's analytical framework of national identity and her terminology of the so called 'cultural valence' (adoption of culture), we argue that identities are processual and constructed, a result of the fact that mobility took place at a certain moment in time and in a specific geographical space. In addition, we see identities as conditioned by a plethora of identifiable objective and subjective reasons. The intensified mobility of children due to labour migrations of their parents leads to multiple challenges within the (re)constructions of children's identities in their new place of settlement.

Keywords: children; migration; national identifications; Poland; Norway

Introduction: researching children's national identification

The article deals with the highly topical issue of national identifications of children of Polish migrants and is empirically grounded in the research results of *Children's Experience of Growing up Transnationally*, a study conducted within the framework of the project titled *Doing Family in Transnational Context. Demographic Choices, Welfare Adaptations, School Integration and Every-Day Life of Polish Families Living in Polish–Norwegian transnationality* (Transfam). The question of identities among children raised in the families of Polish immigrants in Norway is particularly relevant in view of the fact that it has become a new immigration country for Poles after Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004. It gained further prominence as a destination locale in the face of the global economic crisis (Coulter, van Ham and Findlay 2013), as other Western European economies (e.g. the UK and Ireland) were gravely impacted (Terazi and Şenel 2011) and pushed CEE nationals away from their labour markets. According to estimates, Polish immigrants are the largest group of foreigners living in the Kingdom of Norway (SSB 2015). The number of Poles (especially families with children registered in the flows) is increasing annually (see Iglicka and Gmaj 2014; SSB 2015).[1]

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The objective statistical background confirms the urgent need for conducting systematic research dedicated to children from a multidimensional perspective (including Polish and Norwegian cultural background, social, institutional and legal factors, as well as global trends). An important factor is the noticeable difference between the two national cultures, with national norms and values permeating many spheres of everyday lives and only limited space allowed for multicultural optics in policies, institutions and practices. In this context, the tensions that children migrants may experience are a particularly valuable area of inquiry, and the main question is as follows: *Who are the Polish children* (or perhaps just children of Polish migrants?) *in Norway?* It is vital to see what can be said about their identities, experiences, processes of self-labelling, or their everyday joys and worries. Children's experiences and feelings reveal much more than just their individual character: they are embedded in some of the more general global trends that facilitate inquiries into migrating subjects. Overall, research focusing on the issue of children's identities documents that children have a strong sense of their identities as well as their well-being. Moreover, they are confident and involved learners, highly effective in terms of communicating their views to others (see AG 2009). Fast-paced global changes in the societal, economic and cultural realms reach and affect children, permeating into the core of children's world. They speed up the process of growing up and expand children's intellectual, cognitive, critical-thinking and reflective capacities, raising their overall level of consciousness and sensitivity to the processes going on around them. This clearly applies to the process of migration, which they attune to as active participants.

In this article, we want to emphasise the uniqueness of the voice of children in the description of national identifications from the sociological perspective, which is fundamentally different from the psychological perspective.[2] Diane Hogan (2012: 23) offers a strong conviction that 'sociologists of childhood criticise psychology for its focus on documenting age-related competencies at the expense of investigating what it means to be a child. They argue that the developmental approach leads to a detached and impoverished understanding of children's needs'. Furthermore, Hogan argues, 'the ontological and epistemological basis for this (sociological) approach lies mainly in constructivist and critical theory paradigms. The methodologies are primarily case studies with children conceptualised as active participants of the research endeavor, and the favoured methods of data collection are interviews and participant observations. There is a strong emphasis on reflexivity, and on interpretative approaches to analysis'. Hogan (*ibidem*) points out to the pitfalls of psychological approach as seen by sociologists, which she perceives as the fact that 'focus on development has led to the neglect of the quality and meaning of children's present lives, the search for 'universal' laws of child development, the assumption that child development is 'natural', a view of children as passive, and a focus on age-related competency/deficits rather than on subjective experiences'.

This perspective emphasises the complexity and multidimensional nature of the socio-cultural environment, as well as political, institutional, legal, individual and biographical contexts in which the processes of adaptation take place (Kłoskowska 1996).[3] While painting a clearly sociological portrait of children's national identifications, we address the strong presence of migration experiences in the lives of children growing up abroad. On the basis of findings obtained through selected research methods and techniques we argue that children have a strongly developed sense of belonging and identity. Children identify with specific locales (e.g. the village that they or their parents come from), people (e.g. kin members, friends, acquaintances), as well as cultural artefacts belonging to both their country of origin and the destination country (language, rituals, habits).

Our findings provide specific data about processes taking place in the early phase of migration (among children aged 6 to 13). The paper's main aim is to show which identifications are manifested by children experiencing the situation of migration. International mobility is seen as causing multifaceted changes in family system, school system, peer relations, as well as demands and expectations of the receiving state, particularly when compared to those of the sending country. We assume that national identifications at this stage of

the life-cycle need to be seen as socially constructed and processual in character. They are to some extent a response to the subjective and objective factors impacting life in the new country. In order to uncover and analyse the national identifications of children of Polish immigrants in Norway, we employ the theoretical framework of cultural valence, proposed by the renowned Polish sociologist Antonina Kłoskowska in 1996. The results of our study demonstrate that migrant children not only need a sense of national belonging but also manifest their identifications. At the same time, expressing identification does not necessarily mean belonging to a single national culture, nor does it equate adoption, or valence, of this culture.[4] Our research into migrant children's identities makes a small yet unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge, particularly so in the context of Anselm L. Strauss's important thesis put forward in *Mirrors and Masks. The Search for Identity*, which holds that 'a man must be viewed as embedded in a temporal matrix not simply of his [her] own making, but which is peculiarly and subtly related to something of his own making-his conception of the past as it impinges on himself' (Strauss 1959: 164). Therefore, the migration process is unique in how it forces individuals to tackle the question of identity on an almost daily basis. A child migrant wonders who he or she is in the new social setting, whether they feel 'at home' here or, on the contrary, experience alienation and feel 'foreign' or unfamiliar. Importantly, the experiences of self-identifications and ways of belonging to spaces in the early life impact on the future choices and life-orientations, as they form the projected identities with the use of resources and richness of two or more cultures (Castells 1997).

The literature review: intersections of nation, identity and childhood in mobility

Over the last two decades, there has been growing interest among social scientists in migrant children and young people (Orgocka 2012), but, as noted by Moskal (2014: 279) 'the perspectives of migrant children and young people have been largely omitted in youth studies. Existing literature focuses predominantly on young people born to migrant parents in the host country, while the problems of first generation of migrant youth have received limited attention'. The current research landscape is marked by quite a number of studies dedicated to children's identities in general. However, a review of the sociological literature shows an apparent research gap when it comes to the issue of Polish migrant children's identities as a specific topic of empirical and fieldwork-based studies. It is easier to find studies on adaptation, communication, language competence, diaspora/migrant organisations and educational entities. Notably, much research on Polish migrant families with children in the receiving countries has been conducted by foreign researchers and/or Polish scholars affiliated with universities abroad. Some relevant authors in this area include White (2011), Moskal (2010, 2014, 2015), Ní Laoire, Carpena-Méndez, Tyrrell, White (2011, 2013), Praszałowicz, Irek, Małek, Napierała, Pustułka, Pyłat (2013), as well as Ryan and Sales (2013) and Pustułka (2014).

Among plentiful available approaches to children's identities, one research lens offers a conviction that children's identities are moulded by developmental changes aligned with the life-course (Bailey 2009; Wingens, Windzio, de Valk and Aybek 2011; Akesson 2015), alongside the emotions associated with their current 'socio-spatial experience' (Akesson 2015: 35). The process of identity-shaping in childhood encompasses 'the integration of the past with the present and the future to provide continuity and/or consistency' (*ibidem*). In the context of migrant children, the issue of identity and a feeling of belonging were addressed through the lens of hybrid identity perspective, used by Ní Laoire, Carpena-Méndez, Tyrrell and White (2011) researching children of immigrants in Ireland, among others. It has been stated and verified that children's individual identity is built in the constant process of negotiating with others (relational identity and belonging), which occurs on multiple levels at the same time. Many variants of identity serve children in their everyday life goals – depending heavily on the social context that they find themselves in (Ní Laoire *et al.* 2011, see also Pustułka, Ślusarczyk, Strzemecka 2015). A 'travelling self' of migrant-child may be also seen 'as one who

moves physically from one place to another, following "public routes and beaten tracks", but who at the same time embarks on undetermined journeys, constantly negotiating between home and abroad, between here and there and elsewhere' (Minh-ha 2011: 27, cf. Oikarinen-Jabai 2015: 78–79). Oikarinen-Jabai's (2015) research among Somali youths in Finland shows that, although the youngest migrants would not travel physically, they are permanently experiencing a journey. This leads to ambivalence, an important phenomenon that – based on Oikarinen-Jabai's study – one is likely to find when analysing the narratives of young participants (*ibidem*: 78–79).

The relations between identity and place are complex and constantly evolve through time and space (Hopkins 2010; Ní Laoire *et al.* 2011; Duhn 2014; Akesson 2015; Millei 2015; Moskal 2015; Oikarinen-Jabai 2015). Scholars exploring postmodern conceptualisations of identity show that fluidity may also be a constant challenge for an individual who seeks to reach stability and finally feel rooted (Burszta 2004: 37). The importance of traditions and pre-existing values decreases as the interactions between local communities and new global orders increase. The 'cultural codes' (Rapaille 2007) and 'anchors of certainty' (Burszta 2013) which used to decide a directionality of a person's actions and decisions have become less 'set in stone'. Consequently, the traditional frames of identity disappear as the new identity framings take over. Even our seemingly inconsequential decisions in the everyday realm – what to wear, how to have fun, how to care for our body – are all parts of the process in which we constantly create and (re)define our identities. The contemporary world in general, and the context of growing up transnationally in particular (e.g. Ní Laoire *et al.* 2011) mean that identity is necessarily a reflexive process (Giddens 1991) of a highly complex nature (e.g. Jano 2013). No longer 'a state', it is now a process of 'doing identity'.

We agree with other researchers (see AG 2009) that the notions of identity and belonging go beyond the family milieu and are constructed on the levels of local community, nation-state and the globe. The identities are created and inter-negotiated in relations with 'significant others', places, and cultural artefacts. Positive experiences collected in childhood allow the child to develop, understand oneself better, experience a feeling of self-respect and belonging, a sense of affinity and/or rootedness. It is children's agency, as well as guidance, care and teaching by families and educators that shape children's experiences of growing up.

Theoretical framework: national identifications and cultural valence

Exploring the issue of children's national identities, we apply the well-known conceptualisations of national identity and 'cultural valence' (*walencja kulturowa*) developed by Antonina Kłoskowska in her 1996 book *National Cultures at the Grass-Root Level* [published in English in 2001]. Cultural valence is defined not only as an adoption of a significant portion of the national culture, but relies primarily on the fact that this culture comes to be considered as one's own: it is seen as familiar, serves to ascertain a sense of self-worth, dignity, and belonging to a community. These frameworks, which move beyond the hybrid, fluid and fragmentary concepts of identity, refer to what is relatively persistent and constitutes the basis or the core of 'Polishness', described in particular as culture (language and literature, religion), tradition-led practices (e.g. Christmas, Easter, family bonds, children's names) and history (partitions, uprisings, wars, Solidarity movement). While this conception does not imply an unambiguous identification or does not necessarily assign the individual to a single place, culture, or flag, it allows discovering the cultural differentials. It also helps to investigate the issue of belonging in the increasingly shared spectrum of transnational experiences (fashion, life's style, electronic gadgets, and virtual communications).

Adopting Kłoskowska's (1996: 113–133) particular analytical frame (1996: 113–133) does not mean that the presented identifications are stable, persistent and exist in their pure form. Rather, it means that identities are processual and constructed: they result from the fact that mobility took place at a certain moment in time,

in a specific space, and, finally, it was conditioned by a plethora of identifiable objective and subjective reasons. Over the life-course of a child, identifications are likely to change multiple times, take the form of an 'identity journey' (dwelling-in-travel, or being 'on the road'), or even emerge as particular turning points – dramatic and conflict-centred identities that need to be 'reworked anew' (Trąbka 2014), and perhaps reach the point of national conversion.

The four identified types of cultural valence and their respective national features crucial to identity are as follows: 1) univalence – inherent and integral national identification, unidirectional in nature, 2) bivalence – dual/binational identity, 3) ambivalence – uncertain national identification, and 4) polyvalence – cosmopolitism (Kłoskowska 1996: 129). On the latter, we note Lash and Urry's (1994, cf. Trąbka 2014: 27) understanding of cosmopolites' interest for places they visit and culturally different people they meet, as well as Hannerz's (1996) approach to cosmopolitan traits as focused on transnationality and deterritorialised lifestyle. These insights are important in that they showcase competencies – an approach to be also noticed in some other identifications.

Methodological framework and applied methods

Methodology and conceptual issues of interviewing children

Childhood and children should not be seen as natural or universal features of human societies but rather should be seen as socially constructed (Smith 2011: 15, 16). As a form of social construct, they determine not only everyday thinking but also scholarly reflections. Although the assumption that children are incapable of either forming or comprehensibly stating their views has plagued earlier research, we favour the current approach which sees children as fully competent narrators of their experiences. Additionally, we urge not to use age as an indicator of competency (or lack thereof) but instead offer a stance embedded in respect for children's rights and agency, again following Smith's directives (*ibidem*: 16). Thus, our methodological framework for studying children's national identifications is grounded in the concept of agency and the idea that children are active agents (see e.g. Hyvönena, Kronqvistb, Järveläa, Määttäa, Mykkänena and Kurkia 2014: 85). This type of lens includes the notion of young participants as 'social actors, subjects, partners, knowers, and contributors'. As children's experiences become increasingly centralised in the research process, the researchers begin to count on children and research collaboratively with them (*ibidem*: 86, see also Smith 2011). Of course, the point here is not who – an adult or a child – is more important. Rather, it is the conviction that empirically co-constructed meanings should take into account equal visibility of opinions. In our study we believe that an authentic engagement in research from children's side can only come from an original, meaningful and interesting topic (Smith 2011: 17). In addition, we draw on Smith's claim that 'chances of participatory dialogue and gaining an understanding of the child's standpoint are greater when the topic meant something to both child and researcher, and when the researcher positioned herself as less knowledgeable then the child' (*ibidem*). For example, the topic of international mobility was found to be this type of a critical subject for children during the interviews, as further elaborated in *Methods and fieldwork* subsection. Westcott and Littleton (2005) rightfully find it surprising that researchers separate their conceptual standpoint from the field methods they use, and we sought to avoid this pitfall by constantly maintaining a link between the empirical methods used and the theoretical conceptualisation briefly discussed above.

Methods and fieldwork

In 2014 we carried out research with children of Polish immigrants in Norway.[5] The participants were children born in Poland, Norway and the UK, aged 6 to 13, who live permanently in Norway. The children come from intra-ethnic (Polish–Polish) and inter-ethnic (Polish–Norwegian) couples, currently attend Norwegian primary schools and speak Polish (and display at least communicative competence in the language).

Recent research on children's opinions has favoured the use of a combination of methods (see Hyvönena *et al.* 2014: 87). Similarly, our sociological analysis of national identifications among migrant children is based on the following data sources: 1) semi-structured interviews with children aged 6 to 13, born in Poland to intra-ethnic couples (a total number of 30), 2) observation in the research situation (children's rooms), and 3) Sentence Completion Method applied in the case of older children (aged 9 to 13).[6] It is to be noted that the 30 interviews analysed actually encompassed 32 participants (20 boys, 12 girls), as two group interviews with sibling pairs (four children in total) were conducted in addition to the 28 individual interviews.[7] The main issues raised in our approach comprising a semi-structured interview guide, drawing(s) and Sentence Completion Method[8] were as follows: 1) family and leisure: relations with parent(s) and sibling(s), wider kin in Poland and Norway, types and frequency of contacts, patterns of spending time and leisure activities (hobbies and interests), 2) school/learning and friends/peers: assessing peer groups and networks, relations with teachers and evaluation of the support received from school, language competences, 3) national identifications, choices and future plans.

According to our research scheme, each meeting with a child would start by obtaining a written consent of the parent and a verbal consent of the child who was to participate in the study. The researcher presented the aim of the study, asked for a permission to (audio)record the meeting, as well as answered any questions the parents and/or the child/ren had. Subsequently, the researcher informed the child/ren that she would like to spend some time with her/him/them and learn about their lives, for instance how old they were, which school they attended, how they liked living in Norway and whether they had visited Poland, and so on. After the consent was obtained (i.e. an affirmative answer to the question of: 'Do you agree to speak with me?' was given), a child would usually invite a researcher into her/his room. At that point the research meeting began with either drawing and/or interview probing. The researcher always brought a selection of art supplies (paper, crayons, pencils, etc.), which were much welcome by children. The initial warm-up task was aimed at building rapport (Punch 2002: 328) and often meant a request for drawing of (something that pertained to) child's family and/or a conversation about kinship. If a child did not want to draw, he or she would usually propose a different activity such as browsing photographs, playing a game on the console, having a snack/meal together, playing with a pet, or showing their hobby/collection, and the interview then went on.

Overall, the children were positively disposed to spending time with the researcher and enjoyed the meetings and her company in the child's private space. Choosing to conduct the interviews in children's homes clearly facilitated working in partnerships and a sense of togetherness in knowledge-building. In our research, boys and girls proved to be engaged informants providing what we choose to call 'migration knowledge'. This knowledge was transferred not only through a conversation with the researcher but also when the children showed their private lives. They shared their worlds, stories, experiences, interests, or affection for specific people and places.

Findings: Polish migrant children's national identities

Delineating national identifications

Of particular interest and importance for our interpretations were children's declarations concerning their national identities. When discussing their sympathies and antipathies, as well as feelings of (non)belonging, the children often referred to a variety of geographical spaces (e.g. in phrases such as 'in my home country – Poland' or 'in "our" Norway') and used descriptors such as 'here' and 'there' for places they perceived as 'closer' or 'more remote'. In many cases the narratives included clear statements like 'I am Polish' or 'I am Norwegian', as well as equally fascinating declarations like 'I am Polish and Norwegian' or 'I am not quite sure who I am'. The child participants were allocated to the different types of national identification not only based on their declarations (both oral in the interview and written using Sentence Completion Method), but also relying on observation of children's rooms. The categorisation into a specific type was conditioned upon several criteria such as language use (Polish/Norwegian/English), bonds with family members and acquaintances in and/or from Poland, consumer behaviours and preferences (e.g. favourite cuisine being Polish/Norwegian/international), supporting sports teams (Polish/Norwegian/other), media and literary preferences (Polish/Norwegian/international) (see Table 1).

Table 1. National identity types present among children of Polish migrants born in Poland, currently living in Norway based on the children's declaration

Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4
Univalence – Poland	**Univalence – Norway**	**Bivalence – Poland and Norway**	**Ambivalence**
Poland	**Norway**	**Poland Norway** ↔	**Poland Norway** ?
Inherent and integral national identification with Poland Special attachment to Polish culture e.g. use of Polish language, maintenance of family ties, return to Poland, do not follow some specific Nordic norms (e.g. 'candy day'[11]).	**Inherent and integral national identification with Norway** Selecting Norway as one's place of settlement / centre of life, using Norwegian language in the everyday life, at home and in school, produce an original version of specific Nordic norms (e.g. 'candy day') or adapt the norms unchanged.	**Double/dual/ bi-directional national identification** Preference for both what is Polish and what is Norwegian. Confident use of both languages, create an original version of specific Nordic norms (e.g. 'candy day').	**Ambivalent national identification** Uncertainty of one parents' living situation causes fears, depression, poor results at school, insufficient knowledge of Norwegian language, no sentiment for one's space/place of life, do not adopt specific Nordic norms (e.g. 'candy day') or create their original versions.

Source: Based on A. Kłoskowska (1996).

Kłoskowka's framework not only fits the analysis well, but it also remains a valid and contextualised approach to the uniqueness of national identities in the Polish cultural context. Having decided to use Kłoskowska's framework, we thoroughly analysed which types of identifications appear among the declared identities of the respondents, and what kinds of explanations are given for those specific choices. In the process of ongoing analysis of the empirical data, it was confirmed that Kłoskowska's types do not appear among children in their 'pure' form. The fluidity of categories, as well as their mutual entanglements and cross-influences were noted and discussed in the biographies analysed by Kłoskowska. Special attention is given to the events from child-

hood and youth, which are believed to be constitutive of national orientations at the later life-stages. Nevertheless, each of the types has a dominating core of 'Polishness' and/or 'Norwegianness', or, alternatively, 'ambivalence' or 'cosmopolitanism' feature.

Across the 32 individual declarations (made by children born in Poland to Polish–Polish nationally homogenous couples), the double Polish–Norwegian identity is the one most commonly manifested (14 children, 6 girls, 8 boys). For as many as 9 children (1 girl, 8 boys) we discovered ambivalence and uncertainty. Five children with an integral unidirectional identity displayed a Polish orientation (2 girls, 3 boys) and four respondents showed a unilateral Norwegian identity (3 girls, 1 boy).[9] Bearing in mind the processual nature of identity formation among children and the fact that research was conducted at a particular temporal moment of their lives and broader history, we tackle these four types of identifications in the analyses below.[10]

Bivalence –Poland and Norway

Some of the general and pronounced characteristics of children declaring bivalent orientations include using both Norwegian and Polish in their private spaces, celebrating both the Polish and the Norwegian holidays, consumption divided between Polish and Norwegian products, dishes (cuisines), as well as culture texts (newspapers, books, TV programmes, movies), cheering on Polish and Norwegian sportsmen and sportswomen, and, last but not least, a wish to live in Norway and/or in Poland. Children with this orientation create their original version of the 'candy day' norm. For children in this group both national and social spaces – Polish and Norwegian – are relatively well-recognised, discovered, familiar, and, most importantly – well-liked. We present a selection of children's statements below.

Adrian (aged 10, migrated at the age of 4):

Stella: *Do you like it here in Norway overall? You have been here for quite some time now.*

A: *Yeah, well, it can get a bit boring (...). I am really missing my grandma's apple pie, Polish milk and also the yoghurts, Kubuś [a Polish juice brand], as well as many, many things (...).*

S: *And where would you like to live?*

A: *In a place that is a blend of Norway and Poland.*

S: *A blend of Norway and Poland, right?*

A: *Yeah.*

S: *And how do you do that?*

A: *Somehow.*

Alicja, who is now 9 years old and migrated at the age of 1, filled in her SCM as follows:

Lubię Polskę, bo   for det er varmere

Lubię Norwegię, bo   for jeg har mange venner

I like Poland because it is warmer (the weather is warmer than in Norway)

I like Norway because (translated from Polish) I have a lot of friends (here in Norway)

Children name a plethora of reasons, such as friends, family, climate, school successes, and excellent language skills (which could allow them to pass for a native speaker) to explain their affinity with Poland and Norway. The reasons listed are considered significant 'here and now' and validate children's links to both countries. When asked about blending or managing the two national identities, a child does not offer any specific solutions, but seems to believe that somehow it will simply happen. A striking feature of many narratives is that children's identifications are not fixed but tend to be fluid. In certain situations, they are more indicative of the ambivalent type. Within the bivalent identification (as well as in the univalent Norwegian one), children accentuate these particular competences that make it possible for them to feel well and 'at home' in Norway and prevent them from feeling 'out of place' or 'unwelcome' due to the fact that they are Polish. Children speak a lot about positive experiences of befriending Norwegian boys and girls, in addition to the special role of 'multicultural integration facilitators' played by computer games and the new globally spreading communication technologies. The virtual connections translate into real lives and result in being invited to friends' birthday parties, playing sports together, or organising slumber parties.

Ambivalence

Broadly speaking, a child with an uncertain ambivalent identification often has contradictory feelings about using Polish or Norwegian in a particular space or place, he or she may feel strange about celebrating Polish or Norwegian holidays, and feels less comfortable discussing their consumption choices as rooted in the Polish or Norwegian context. Children with this orientation do not adopt the standards of 'candy day' or develop their original version of this habit. These children are often unsure about where they would like to live, and may experience fear, depression, as well as suffer from diminished well-being in connection with language difficulties which, in turn, impact on the school achievement, ability to do homework as well as the frequency of communication breakdowns between school/teachers and themselves/parents. It is quite common for children in this group to have a rather narrow social network of friends and acquaintances, as their limited language skills exclude them from peer group membership.

Let's hear from Adam, aged 10, who migrated at the age of 2:

I am very stressed when I have to go to school… Yhm, there is something that spoils the atmosphere at school. [it is] very nice [in Norway] but I also like [being] in Poland. I would rather live in Poland because it is okay for me to live there, but in Norway it is also very nice, but well I would rather prefer [to be] in Poland. (…) I simply like Poland more than Norway, I don't know why. (…) Yes, I miss it because I have been in Norway for so long. When I grow up I do not know if I'll move to Poland, but (…) I don't know if that would happen. I will think some more about it because I am not sure.

Consequently, filling in the SCM test, Adam wrote: When I grow up I would like to live in *I am not sure.*

Next, two brothers, Sylwester (8) and Jacek (9), who migrated in 2012, discuss their preferences:

S: Do you go to Polish school?

Sylwester, Jacek: *Yeah.*

Sylwester: *In kindergarten it was fun. I played a lot.*

S: Yes.

Jacek: *It is better there… Polish school is better than Norwegian, because there they are fighting all the time.*

S: In the Polish school?

Jacek: *No, in the Norwegian one.*

S: They fight in Norwegian school? Oh look at that, during the breaks?

Jacek: *All the time.*

Sylwester: *Mhm.*

S: Where would you boys like to live?

Sylwester: *I don't know, I don't know, nowhere.*

S: Jacek?

Jacek: *I do not think about that.*

Nina, who is now 10 years old and migrated at the age of 7, is reflexive and open about her troubles at school:

I have huge problems with her [a teacher] and I have trouble communicating with her and sometimes it got to the point of, oh man! The problems were so huge! At least Grandma is always taking my side. She always goes to school and takes my side, defends me. She always comes to school and talks to the teacher. Mum cannot protect me from that after all, because, firstly, she does not speak Norwegian very well, and, secondly and more importantly, she does not feel like she could protect me that much. But Grandma does, she is more like that, that she always protects me and defends me from everything. I have a feeling that the teacher always gives me more homework, and I also have this thing when one has trouble reading and one reads in a different manner, letters get all mixed up. The teacher knows about it because they gave me a test. She knows about it and still gives me more homework. The more difficult ones, and I tried to talk to her about it but she says that this is so I can learn more. (…) I know that I do many things wrong. (…) I would really [like to] change my grade, even repeat a year, take my time over it. The teacher does not understand that I need help and more time. Actually, when I was younger I always wanted to have a horse

and this is still my destiny, to have a horse. And yes, right, to go with him to Spain, alone. This is my dream. And also to ride and play the guitar. And this is somehow well… I was young, I had a big imagination. Now it's also big, but maybe different, because I know that it cannot really be done.

The problems these children articulate are typical of their age and so refer to school, may be linked to peer violence or (most commonly) directly stem from a poor language competency. In their responses, they avoid the subject of national affinity expression or fail to point to the place they choose, which may suggest certain difficulty in organising their life as children of migrant parents. Children are rarely consulted – they cannot choose but tend to be forced to migrate and cannot overturn or contest the decision that is crucial for the entire family. Children's agency should depend on their capacity to deal with requirements posed by social life in the new and complex context of the destination country. A specific child-like solution to accumulating problems is evident in Nina's story: she is raised by a single mother who works long hours as a cleaner and travels a lot due to her involvement with the Jehovah's Witnesses church. A grandmother, who is Polish but married a Norwegian man, is Nina's carer, friend and defender when she gets in trouble. Faced with feelings of loneliness and helplessness, Nina chooses an imaginary and unrealistic 'escape' to warm Spain on her dream horse and with her dream guitar. Nina's problems escalated and a teacher worried about her well-being (e.g. she reported suffering from a sleep disorder). At the same time, Nina identifies with a country that she only knows from stories – she wants to belong to an unrealistic social setting. She identifies neither with Poland nor with Norway, which may be attributed to her problematic family history as well as a sense of alienation and uprooting through migration.

Language deficits translate into a perceived lack of talent for school learning, which in turn affects children's self-worth and identity. In some cases, they reinforce a negative attitude towards the receiving society. Children do not have the same skills for managing identities as adults, and they are lacking in the effective defence mechanisms that would protect them against the psychological costs of adaptation.

Univalence towards Poland

Children who manifest univalent identification with Poland mostly use Polish language at home / in private realm, often visit their family in Poland and their Polish relatives in Norway, often use Skype or telephone for communicating with kin members in Polish, express preference for Polish food, largely take part in Polish supplementary schooling, are religious (take holy Sacraments, attend Polish masses, pray at home and before meals). Their cultural consumption is in Polish (newspapers, magazines, books, as well as TV is read/watched in Polish), and they support Polish sportsmen and sportswomen. Children with this orientation do not follow the norm of 'candy day'. For many children, it is their private life at home that constitutes a 'small Poland' – a contained space of patrimony abroad. This private sphere protects them from the consequences of failures, compensates for troubles or conflicts with peers or at school. It is here that what is Polish is certainly going to be properly protected and maintained. In that context Marek, who is now 7 years old and migrated at the age of 4, has stated his identity early on in the interview:

M: I am not Norwegian.

S: You aren't, are you?

M: No, I am Polish.

Similarly Paulina, who has been in Norway since she was 3 years old and is now 11, strongly declares her love for Poland as her patrimony. On the one hand, she does not seem to have much in common with her destination society and, on the other, she misses her grandparents and the warm atmosphere of closeness. Once again, we hear of problems connected to an insufficient command of the local language:

> I would like to live in Poland because that would mean I would live close to my grandma and I would understand more at school. Whenever I visit Poland, I don't have the heart to leave for Norway.

The second method (Sentence Completion Test) supports this finding as Paulina's written declaration sounds like a clear statement of a plan:

> When I grow up I would like to live in Poland at my grandma's and I would like to study at the university there.

Univalence towards Norway

Children in the group marked by the univalent Norwegian identification generally display features to some extent opposite to those described above for the children focused on Poland, but here oriented towards Norway. These children primarily speak Norwegian, both at home and elsewhere, and adore Norwegian holidays and celebrations. Children's consumption preferences (meals, food) are for Norwegian products and dishes. Similarly, books, newspapers and TV are also in Norwegian. Children with this orientation usually produce an original version of 'candy day' or adopt the unchanged local standard. Also, peer contacts and friendships are stronger with Norwegian rather than Polish children and support is shown primarily for Norwegian sportsmen and sportswomen. Children univocally express a wish to live in Norway: living there brings them many pleasures and a high degree of satisfaction overall. For many, migrating to Norway made it possible to fulfil dreams that it was impossible to realise in Poland. This indicates a success story of parental migration and upward mobility, as well as a higher social/material status attained in the destination country. In their stories migration is the opposite of 'problematic': it opened doors and offered new prospects, as well as very positive changes that were conducive to the unilateral identification with Norway.

For instance, Marta, who is now 9 years old and migrated as a one-year-old toddler, sees Norway as her home and uses a telling metaphor of a 'dog-bed' in a positive sense: just as a dog needs its home/house, she also needs her warm and stable place – a home. Arguably, this means that her living conditions in Poland were not particularly appealing and there was nothing to return to there:

> M: I really like my life.

> S: So you wouldn't like to live in Poland in the future?

> M: No.

> S: And where would you like to live?

> M: I would like to live in America or in Norway. But normally here in Norway. I have my place here, just like dogs have their places and do not want to sleep in a different place. Norway is this kind of place for me.

A similarly unambiguous narrative was presented by Honorata who is 10 years old and came to Norway just 10 months prior to the interview. She appears to enjoy the Norwegian rules, life values and lifestyle. Not only does she speak Norwegian fluently, but also seems to suggest she has forgotten her Polish. A shift in her identification is quite radical, given a short duration of her stay abroad:

S: So how do you like it here?

H: Everything is great, people are kind.

S: Yhym.

H: I cannot complain.

S: I know that you have not been here for long, but where would you like to live?

H: HERE!

S: And why is that?

H: Because the rules here are better… (…) There is not one thing here that I do not like. (…) For a long time me [and my younger brother – 6-year-old Leon] did not speak Polish anymore, so this is why the words escape us, one has to do it in Norwegian.

Honorata chooses to fill in the SCM test in Norwegian and does not hesitate to declare her attachment to Norway:

Når jeg blir voksen, vil jeg bo i Norge *When I grow up I would like to live in Norway.*

Grown-up's perspective: Karol's case

Having analysed a vast empirical material, we were still curious about how identities of young Poles in Norway change over time. The longitudinal and life-course perspective is generally extremely important (Bailey 2009; Wingens *et. al.* 2011), and the questions about persistence of identity orientations over long periods of exposure to different cultures were raised by scholars interested in biographical and autobiographical inquiries, such as Antonina Kłoskowska (1996), and, more recently, Agnieszka Trąbka (2014) in her study on the processes of identity reconstructions among Third Culture Kids (TCKs). For those reasons, we were intrigued by a possibility to look at grown-ups, as we were convinced that it is not only longitudinal and panel studies that can provide answer to the questions of orientations durability and the prospective implications of childhood migration from Poland to Norway in adulthood. Below we present some ideas on how to address the above questions, as we had an opportunity to interview a grown-up son of one of the interviewed experts and hear his childhood migration story from a grown-up's perspective.

Please bear in mind that this part of our article is more illustrative in character, as we show the national identification as a dynamic and remarkably complex social process. The sense of belonging and national identity is subject to constant negotiations, both at the individual and group level. This process is by no means easy for individuals and is manifested in, for instance, the retrospective histories. Thanks to the account of an adult

man, one can observe significance of migratory experiences from the life-course perspective. During the interview, a young adult man reveals details of his struggles with the criteria of Polishness and Norwegianness that began as early as his school years. Eventually, the respondent encountered formal requirements that shifted his adult life closer to being Norwegian. Growing up abroad brings about a plethora of chances and barriers that must be tackled by the youngest migrants – today or perhaps sometime in the future. From separation with close kin members, to experiences of peer relations, to a decision to formally give up Polish citizenship the events mark subsequent identity-centred reconciliations. Renouncing Polish citizenship was particularly crucial, a sign not only of the formal process of naturalisation, but also of a loss of an identity marker of a patriotic and nostalgic character (Désilets 2015). It evoked feelings of stress, tension and a sort of trauma linked to the loss of Polishness, which were surprising to the respondent himself.

Our interlocutor, 22-year-old Karol, came to Norway 9 years earlier. Being interviewed posed quite a challenge to him, as it constituted a sort of 'cleansing' experience, an evaluation of his childhood, youth and early adult life. His story contains reflections on integration-related competences – institutional as well as legal requirements that the Norwegian state asks immigrants to meet. It also revealed certain topics and problems that may not have been understood thus far by the interviewed children. The story we present constitutes a noteworthy example of 'identity-making' (Woodward 2004: 16) in Polish–Norwegian 'space of transnationality' (Jackson, Crang and Dwyer 2004: 1).

Karol is a son of Polish immigrants, born in Norway in 1993 as a Polish citizen. Karol's parents decided to return to Poland soon after his birth and he was raised there until he was 13 years old. He was proud of 'being Polish and having been born in Norway' and he manifested this fact openly in front of his peers, receiving much welcome attention and admiration. He always dreamed of visiting the country of his birth. When he was 10, his father started going to Norway for seasonal work due to economic reasons. Three years later the family (Karol's parents, Karol and his younger brother) decided to move to Norway. This migration was initially planned for one year but eventually turned into permanent settlement. Following migration, Karol went to an integration class with other children of foreigners (*Innføringsklassen*) in order to catch up with his peers in terms of his Norwegian language skills. He then started a regular middle school (*Ungdomsskole*) with Norwegian children, a period he describes as difficult:

What was most difficult and strangest for me was this forced integration [of children]. They want to integrate everyone, and you feel that you are different. (...) It is common that the effect is the opposite of what was intended (...). The welcoming process for a foreigner – child [earlier visits in the future Norwegian school during the time] at the Innføringsklassen treated as mobbing, children then 'turn'. They use it against the new person. It is a type of small hypocrisy. At the beginning everyone was so open that I was even scared – it is unnatural to be so nice to someone. There are also boundaries. And there were no boundaries there. They wanted to know everything about me within an hour. This was in some way unnatural (...) because when I look back, going to this school, I thought I would be the same type of pupil, but then when I arrived, the way they were treating me, as if I was made of porcelain, so I felt like an object that everyone was looking at. Of course that was not totally normal, and it surprised me. (...) It was good during a visit in my future school but then they [peers] started to use it against me. It is very likely that if those groups did not use it against me, then my experience of it [entering Norwegians school as a foreign pupil] would be positive for me.

Karol stresses his then feelings of alienation, rejection by the Norwegian peers, isolation and their pretend interest. After early experiences in a special class, he faced the reality of a foreign language and it quickly transpired that his language competencies were not on a par with those of his Norwegian peers. He came to

Norway as a teenager with no knowledge of the language whatsoever, which tremendously affected his trajectory of adaptation. Karol stated that during school breaks he was constantly teased by his peers to say something in Norwegian. Permanent difficulties contacting with others prevented him from entering the peer group and led to depression:

(...) so when they teased me they laughed of course and I would then also pretend that it was funny but being a clown is really not much fun. So it resulted in me starting to keep to myself, becoming isolated. I would go to school and not open my mouth for the whole day unless I was forced to do so. When I think about it now I think I had a period of depression. I did not want to get up to go to school. (...) I would brush my teeth, run to the bus and then wait until the school was over so that I could go home, do something else. I would go for a run, or train, do things to fill the time and not think about the school and everything around me.

From a life-course perspective applied to Karol's story it is possible to conclude that it was his agency, confidence and interests (sport, photography) that made it possible for him to deal with the lack of acceptance and being rejected by peers:

What I was always good at [at school] was sports. I felt like a king, if only just for a moment. I always managed to show it. Thanks to that I somehow managed to go through it [school life]. I had a goal of beating records. I also found a passion – photography and started to work as a newspaper deliveryman every day after school. I would run with those papers and look at it as sports training. (...) There were heaps of papers and I [delivered them] on time. The fastest – the better. This is how I first had my own money, some satisfaction and a way to get away.

Unfortunately, Karol's parents were having their own issues at the time (a number of work and home-related issues) and were not aware of the severity of his problems. Luckily, in Karol's view, his parents bought a house in a less affluent/elite district:

[The parents] were focused on themselves and did not see it as a big problem. Comparing my problems to their problems – mine did not seem big, but well, everyone has their own scale, and during that time it was a lucky coincidence that they bought a house on the East side of Oslo and I finished the gymnasium there (...) with more people from abroad around, [children of] all nationalities were found there in one place.

That was a big change for Karol, whose previous school was mostly attended by Norwegian upper-class children oriented towards physical appearance and interested in fashionable clothing. A change of environment through a residential move from an ethnically homogenous to a multicultural surrounding led to a betterment of Karol's well-being and improved educational outcomes – crucial for the life-course perspective outlook. The children at the new school were somehow 'charmed' by Karol, as he moved from a richer district, but he also stated:

I told them I was Polish and did not speak Norwegian so well, and then it turned out this was the best thing that could have happened to me, because I was then taken out from this current I was starting to follow (...) my grades got better not because I suddenly learned a lot but because I was motivated to study.

Karol sums up all his school experiences (in Poland and in Norway) and reflects on their meaning from his current standpoint. His own trajectory brought about a positive attitude towards cultural diversity:

> *It is like this: when you are used to being okay and being liked [in Poland], then you will have a problem here when they are teasing you. It depends on the person a lot, I mean, their character. Everyone must deal with some things alone. Now as some time has passed I admit that this experience was good. I became more open thanks to that. (...) I can now relate to various cultures, I know the 'street code' and can make friends really easily.*

After completing his compulsory schooling, Karol decided to apply for admission to special forces. A prerequisite to attend this kind of establishment was to be in possession of Norwegian citizenship. Karol did not have it and was given one year to renounce his Polish citizenship. A *de iure* abandonment of Polishness turned out to be a really tough decision that generated a lot of stress. Similarly to the difficult peer problems he experienced as a teenager, this decision made an impact on his identification. Entering adulthood coincided with a national conversion – Karol stopped being Polish and became Norwegian:

> *I am having a difficult time now. I actually do not know if I am Polish or Norwegian. I am partly from Poland, I mean I totally am, I also have my roots there, but I am not sure. I cannot imagine going back to Poland. I like it here [in Norway]. (...) I cannot say whether I feel more Polish or Norwegian. I guess it is Norwegian.*

Conclusions

The findings presented here demonstrate, first and foremost, that children have a lot to say about themselves, their relatives, school, peers, Poland, Norway and, generally, about the world that surrounds them. Drawing on the research among children aged 6 to 13 accompanied by a case study from a grown-up perspective (22-year-old man), we conclude that national identifications are embedded in a constant (re)definig process (Kłoskowska 1996). Children of Polish migrants shared what they were currently feeling, showcasing their opinions and national orientations 'here and now'. The adult respondent's story, however, allows us to look at how identifications – especially conversion – are not only formed but also dynamically change throughout the life-course cycle, depending on the matrix of subjectively and objectively experienced events. Future orientations and choices of the many Polish children of migrant parents in Norway will further demonstrate what growing up transnationally means in terms of self-definitions and a person's ties to Poland, Norway, and beyond.

As the data shows, Polish children try to actively (re)construct their post-migratory identities and therefore respond to the challenge delineated above. The bivalent, dual identity is a feature of the largest group of children followed by the ambivalent attitude. Conversely, the unilateral, one-directional national identifications are equally rare for the Polish and for the Norwegian focus. The first type of declarations (bivalence) should be seen as a positive sign – it facilitates creation of networks, bonds and cultural, social, and economic relations between Poland and Norway. One can hope that a shift towards Norway does not indicate a permanent loss of knowledge about one's roots, but it may also be understandable in terms of a fast and conflict-free method for feeling at home through acculturation. It is possible that children manifesting bivalence will soon become the ambassadors and interpreters of what is Polish in Norway and what is Norwegian in Poland. Such connected identities additionally allow a new, useful phenomenon to emerge, which is described as the feeling of 'ownership' over one's identity without forsaking one's heritage. A bivalent identification strengthens the feeling

of belonging and identity that facilitates adaptation and attainment of what Mostwin (1985) called a 'third value' – a higher degree of humanisation. A person's self-worth, dignity, and a feeling of community membership are positively linked to considering two cultures as one's own. A high competence in Norwegian language opens doors for social citizenship and participation in various forms of activities within the Norwegian social life. Notwithstanding the above successes, it is important to explore the stories of children who declare ambivalence, have no clarity about their belonging and seem to be 'on a swing' moving between Poland and Norway. While there is evidence a particular migration-induced dilemma exists, it would be flawed to expect stability, certainty and durability of identity during childhood as a life-course stage. Some researchers (e.g. Bokszański 2007) claim that a forced relocation/displacement of a child can contribute to the emergence of an unauthentic identity in the future. Children with ambivalent orientation usually experience a sense of detachment from certain models of daily life and lifestyle, as well as suffer a loss of status position formerly held in their country of origin. This leads to a sense of loss with regard to security and a feeling of being 'visible' in the receiving society. This visibility means that children are treated as different by others (especially by their peers) and feel differently as well (see also Strzemecka 2015). This is exemplified by a general feeling of relative deprivation, deficits in school achievement, insufficient command of the local language, feeling excluded from the peer environment, as well as no objective success within parental migration stories. Like adults, children may also suffer greatly as migrants. They may display and narrate experiences of loss, physical separation from one's kin members, isolation in the destination society, lack of transferable capital and inability to deal with a change that took place in their life. Children construct their own identity as citizens of the newest nation, so their statements are temporary, captured as at the time of research. With a longer stay in Norway, national identification of children may vary in terms of the 'roots' (belonging and local) and 'wings' (becoming and global) (Duhn 2014: 224).

As with any research, our theoretical framework may be challenged, verified, continued and/or reworked; nevertheless, it serves to initiate a grounded debate on the national identifications of the youngest participants of the migration processes. One issue that deserves much more exploration is the context of Poland-to-Norway migration in its novelty and specificity. We need to look at international relations as well as similarities and dissimilarities between the two national societies, which we believe are characterised by rigorous and strictly defined contents and norms regarding identity, specified by the role of culture, economy, religion, and state in delineating the meaning of nation and nationality. The relative impact of new cultural messages the legal, institutional and environmental contexts (introduced to children mainly by schools and peer groups) will vary, but they are nonetheless expected to influence adaptation strategies and their identity-relevant effects very soon. Any challenges brought by identity and identifications should be linked not only to the scope and strength of the internalised and specific material and symbolic elements of the sending country, but should also be viewed through the lens of the destination country, which includes the Norwegian programme of integration politics.

Notes

[1] The total Polish population in Norway (on 1 January 2015) amounted to 100 000 persons (SSB 2015). The number grew exponentially from just 7 580 people registered in 2004, representing an 11-fold growth by the end of 2012. Among them, 19 360 persons migrated on the grounds of family reunification, meaning that Poles have been the largest group entering Norway for family reasons since 2006. After 2009, the year that was especially harsh for Polish families in Norway (a decrease in the family reunification statistics from 4 423 in 2008 to 2 773 in 2009), a strong drive towards using reunification strategies has been visible again (with the inflow of 4 612 registered in 2010) (Iglicka and Gmaj 2014). As many as 11.6 per cent of

all immigrants and Norwegian-born children with immigrant parents are Polish. Statistics showed 793 Polish children were born in Norway in 2004. In 2013, the number grew to 5 939 (Dzamarija 2014: 35; see also Slany and Strzemecka 2015; Strzemecka 2015).

[2] Although we are aware of the extensive literature on children's identities from a psychological standpoint (see e.g. Boski 2010a, 2010b; Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Nowicka 1998; Grzymała-Moszczyńska 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Baumann 2014; Espín and Dottolo 2015), our research and this article have a clear socio-logical orientation. We use a sociological theoretical framework by Kłoskowska (1996) rather than J. W. Berry's psychological concept of acculturation, which was used and developed in Poland by P. Boski and H. Grzymała-Moszczyńska among others. In this conceptualisation 'psychological acculturation refers to changes in an individual partaking in a situation of cultural contact (...) and directly affected by external culture, as well as changes in the culture that an individual is a participant of' (Boski 2010a, quoting Berry 2003: 19).

[3] Ivar Frønes noted that '[t]here is not one childhood, but many, formed at the intersection of different cultural, social and economic systems natural and man-made physical environments. Different positions in society produce different experiences' (Frønes 1993, cited from Christensen and Prout 2012: 54).

[4] Some sections of this article were used in the Work Package 5 interim report and Working Paper 1 available at: http://www.transfam.socjologia.uj.edu.pl/documents/32445283/07755f03-e527-43dc-900b-ea1f5fb96b47.

[5] From January to May 2014 Stella Strzemecka lived in Norway and carried out ethnographic research of the Polish community. For two weeks she was supported by two field researchers Anna Bednarczyk and Inga Hajdarowicz.

[6] 19 tests in total; SCM was available in three language versions (Polish, Norwegian and English) and children could freely choose which one they would like to complete.

[7] A total number of interviews conducted with children of Polish immigrants amounted to 50, but, for the purpose of this article, data subset from interviews with children born abroad and raised in mixed families were not analysed.

[8] The following sentences were analysed for the purpose of examining national identification preferences: 1) I like Poland because ….., 2) I like Norway because ….., 3) In Poland I don't like ….., 4) In Norway I don't like ….., 5) My home is ….., 6) When I grow up I want to live in ……

[9] The striking gender dynamics will be examined more thoroughly in a future research paper.

[10] The use of Sentence Completion Method was tailored to children's anticipated language preferences and the sentences were available in Polish, Norwegian and English. For the 19 completed tests (11 filled in by girls and 8 by boys) children chose the Norwegian version 11 times, the Polish version 6 times (though one was filled in using a combination of Polish and Norwegian), and the English version twice.

[11] In Norway (similarly to Sweden or Finland), there is a cultural norm associated with the consumption of sweets for children (Lördagsgodis – Saturday Candy or Smågodis – Little Candy). Its tradition dates back to the 20th century. Following the 'healthy eating' prescriptions, it argues that children should only be allowed to eat sweets one day a week (usually Saturdays) (see e.g. Wiklund 2014). Nowadays, children usually receive pocket money, and Norwegian sweets are available to everyone on the shelves in stores at any time. When it comes to Polish transnational family in Norway, the 'candy day' (a term used by children of Polish immigrants) is a standard adopted only by 2 children and rejected by 14 children. An interesting research finding is that this norm is practiced mostly in a non-standard variant (16 children). Based on interviews with children, we have identified three most common variants of 'candy day': 1) sweets twice a week – e.g. on Saturday and Sunday, 2) sweets three times a week – e.g. on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, 3) sweets once a week plus – e.g. on Saturday and each time guests are visiting (family members or friends), regardless of the frequency and day of the week.

Funding

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