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Media as an Identity Negotiator Among "Swedish" Children in Athens and "Japanese" in London

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With its transcultural perspective this paper looks at how families (i.e., parents and children) talk about children's identity and the importance of mothers' homeland media for the children, who are surrounded by a global popular media culture. Both studies used similar methods: interviews, participant observation, and photo-taking. The analysis shows the complexity of identity formation and the need to apply a contextual and relational perspective when wanting to understand the roles of media in the process of forming identity. The mothers' homeland media is an important construction tool in the process and helps the children not only with languages but also catch up with information about peers in mothers' homeland.

Keywords: comparative research, migration, children, identity, homeland media use

The paper is a comparative study based on two separate studies: The Media and Japanese Children in Diaspora: Understanding Japanese Families' Media Consumption and Everyday Lives in London (Kondo, 2005) and Mediated Childhoods in Multicultural Families in Greece (Sjöberg, 2005). With its transcultural perspective the paper reflects upon what it is like growing up with several cultures and the role of media in terms of identity formation among Japanese and Swedish/Greek children in U.K. and Greece. What are the similarities and differences? Both studies had similar aims and methods (interviews, participant observations, and photo-taking) but in different national and cultural contexts. With this paper we hope to contribute to the field of comparative studies on children in diaspora/multicultural settings and the media. By comparing these two studies more knowledge and new understanding is gained about what it is like growing up with several cultures and the importance of mothers' homeland media[1] for these children's negotiation of identities in an increasingly global and transnational media world (cf. Giddens, 1990; Castells, 1996). In order to develop new ways of thinking (theoretically and methodologically), much greater effort is needed by researchers to "… become aware of the similarities between projects being developed in different countries, we can start to come together more, share ideas and collaborate" (Gauntlett, 2005, p. 16). While there may be critics of comparison between different studies in different settings, Beniger (1992) encourages this type of approach to lead to new ways of thinking. Similarities as well as differences in our findings are worth looking at and might trigger new avenues in the way we do research.

Previous comparative media research (cf. Livingstone & Bovill, 2001) has mainly looked at how much

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[1] In the U.K. project the mothers were interviewed and children were observed, while in the Greek studies mothers or both parents took part.

time children and young people worldwide spend on different types of media, media access, with whom, for what purposes, and in what settings (e.g., schools, home) media are used. Studies have also been conducted on the usage of global media like *Disney* and *Pokemon* among youngsters from different cultures (cf. Wasko, Phillips, & Meehan, 2001; Tobin, 2004). Besides looking at media usage, research has examined how migrant children in Europe, with the help of media production represent their experiences of, for instance, peer groups, school, and family (cf. de Block & Sefton-Green, 2004; Christopoulou & de Leeuw, 2005). In the area of reception studies, audience research on particular contents is often compared in various settings (e.g., different countries, classroom/home). Livingstone (2003), however, argues that studies which are edited nation-by-chapter tend to leave the readers with the task of comparing its results. Livingstone (2003) also claims that the aims in comparing studies should be precise and the units of analysis clearly stated. Couldry and Hepp (2006) argued for a "transcultural approach" when comparing media cultures; looking beyond the nation as the natural point of departure. The unit of analysis in this article is the participating families' thoughts based on their cultural backgrounds about identity and the children's usage of particular media. Thus, it is the families' way of using the particular media that serve as a reference point in the analysis rather than looking at the "nations" and its media systems and markets per se. This is however not to dismiss the nation and its cultural distinctive elements, but this analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.

The paper starts with a methodological discussions and a description of the participating families. Thereafter, the children's and their parents' talks about identity will be examined. Finally, the children's experience of the media from the countries where their mothers come from will be looked at.

Reflections on Methodological Approaches

The two studies raised similar research questions with methods such as interviews, observations, field notes, and photo-taking, with the aim of studying media usage[2] in relational and holistic terms, i.e., in everyday life of the participating families (cf. Gillespie, 1995, p. 55). Furthermore, both projects applied a generational perspective (involving both parents/mothers and their children). While the parents/mothers have moved to another country (U.K. and Greece), the children are growing up in these two countries, which is assumed to affect their formation of identities and media usage.

There are, however, also several differences between the projects such as the participating families' nationality, ethnicity, cultural, and personal background and the age of the children. In the study of Japanese families, both parents are originally from Japan, and the case of Swedish families, the mothers are from Sweden and the husbands (except one) from Greece. Another difference is that the Japanese families in the U.K. project are only visitors in London for a specific period of time (about five years), while the Swedish mothers in Greece have taken the decision to stay permanently. We will now look into more detail on the participating families and the verbal and visual methods used when conducting the field work.

The Families

The fieldwork in the U.K. project was carried out for a year from 2002 to 2003 by Kondo and can be said to represent an anthropological form of ethnography, which is advocated by Gillespie (1995, p. 54) "…

[2] The media involved in the two projects were: newspapers, internet, e-mail, computer games, Playstation, CD, books, comics, telephone, postcards, letters, magazines, radio, television, video, DVD. In the U.K. project, also holidays to Disneyland or clothes/stationeries with TV characters were included.

fieldwork based upon intense, long-term participant observation". Eleven Japanese families who had children aged five to eight in London were introduced through a key person such as a manager from Japanese satellite television in London (JSTV) and some families who participated in the previous studies by Kondo (2001). These Japanese families of middle class were temporary living in London sent by their companies (generally for five years). The mothers and children including their siblings (totally 11 mothers and 23 children) were observed and interviewed every two months for a year. The advantage of visiting families repeatedly are mainly to obtain the in-depth and rich data from their everyday lives, where the researcher became intimate with the participants, and to observe changes in the children's usages or interests in the media while they lived in London. The absence of fathers may be pointed out. It is due to fathers' work where they were promoted to be a manager in European offices, often go on business trips to other European cities and spend weekends on playing golf amongst the Japanese expatriates (cf. Ben-Ari, 1998). Therefore, fathers are not regarded as the centre of the family at homes, only mothers and children were interviewed and observed at their homes. The families who participated in this project were West London area (West Acton, Ealing Broadway) where most of the Japanese expatriates concentrate due to the Japanese school, North London area (Finchley) where ex-Japanese school located and is still popular amongst them, and South London (Orpington, Chislehurst, Purely) where they tend to live not as close as the North and West area of London but in white middle-class affluent area where many private schools are located.

The data collection for the Greek project took place during September, 2004, where ten families participated; all living in Athens (e.g., Pireas, Plaka, Faliro, & Metamorfosi) and its surroundings (e.g., Vari) with children of the ages 12-16 (total of 12 children). The families were contacted with the help of the Swedish Institute and the Swedish school in Athens. The children (except one) attended Greek public schools. In all the families the mother is Swedish and has lived in Greece between 10 to 26 years. The husbands were Greeks, except for one family, where the father was non-European. The majority of the families had a middle class background. Their occupations were teacher, secretary, physiotherapist, painter, psychologist, photographer, and businessman. Three others had their own business like a café, a hotel, and a store[3].

Children's Visual Means of Expression

Both studies interviewed both children and mothers, asking about their media experiences and their everyday lives. In addition to in-depth interviews, photo-taking was used. Today, questions are being asked about how various visual means may offer alternative ways in exploring a person's relationship with his or her media culture and the symbolic and social meanings associated with objects in daily life (cf. Gauntlett, 2005; Pink, 2001; Secondulfo, 1997; Cavin, 1994). In the Greek project disposable cameras were sent to the children before the researcher's visit and they were asked to take photos of people, places, and things that were important to them in daily life (thus not only of media). The main purpose of the photos in the Greek project was to act as a "can-opener", as a way of establishing rapport with the younger informants for the latter interview, which took place in their bedroom (cf. Pink, 2001). This encouraged the children to be co-researchers as they got the opportunity to be involved in the research process by shaping the agenda of the

[3] All families in the British and Greek study were assured that participation was voluntary and that the material would be confidential. In the presentation of the material, attempts have been made so that the identity of the participants will not be disclosed. Written permission has also been given by both the parents and the children to use the photos in conferences, publications etc.

later interview (cf. Harper, 1998; Gauntlett, 2005). In the U.K., the children aged five to eight were asked to take photos of their favourite toys or something important to them with the researcher's digital camera (cf. Entz & Galarza, 2000). The photos taken were not only toys, but also of their mothers, siblings, pets, and the researcher.

Another reason why the use of the camera is useful is because the photos show the "world" through children's eyes. This could show different things other than what their mothers believed the children might like. In both projects the children were asked to talk about their photos, which stress a relational type of interpretation, resulting from a dialogue between the child and the researcher. Visual images are filled with ambiguity and it is only by letting the children talk about their photos that the subjective meanings attached to the photos by its informants are brought to the fore (cf. Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002; Pink, 2001). This process of making the children image-makers also inspired, for example, the young people in the Greek project to reflect upon things and people that mattered to them. The Japanese children's photos were taken of their favourite toys as they were told to take "anything important to you". Thus, the photos were not taken randomly but with a certain thought behind them.

The fact that the children used the researcher's camera in the U.K. study had of course consequences on the type of photos taken. With their disposable camera the Greek/Swedish children could take photos of other places and people etc. beyond the private sphere of the home. In the U.K. children under aged 11 are not allowed to go out side by themselves. They were therefore asked to take photos at homes and their gardens.

In addition, children from the middle-classes are busy with lessons after school. The advantage of using the digital camera was that the children could see the photos on the screen and talk about each object to the researcher. That is, the photo-taken has initiated children to talk about what they were interested in and why they chose a particular subject. This has helped the researcher with children who might be shy or not good at expressing their thoughts without objects. Most importantly, the researcher understood what the children actually liked and how they categorised the objects rather than merely observing many objects in their bedrooms.

Interviews and Field Notes

The children in the Greek project were interviewed in their bedrooms and these interviews lasted between 1.5-2 hours. Media researchers (e.g., Bovill & Livingstone, 2001) frequently talk about the rise of bedroom culture in which various media play a crucial role. As has been mentioned above, in the interviews with children their photos served as a reference point. In the interviews, the children were also asked to show the researcher their favourite books, computer games etc.. The mother in each family was also interviewed (the father participated in four of the families). In addition to the interviews, the researcher was sometimes invited to have a coffee break with the family, visiting the family café, or joining a mother to see her daughter training Tae Kwondo. For all the interviews a tape recorder was used and all the material was transcribed verbatim. A combination of research diary and field notes was written during the field work in Athens. The notes contain a mixture of describing, for example, each interview situation in more general terms and thus becoming an important tool in the processing of all impressions during the data collection. An in-depth interview with mothers was carried out in the U.K. project. In order to see any change, the researcher visited them every two months over a year. In the U.K. project the field notes were not taken in front of the informants since this could have disturbed the interviews and natural settings. The field notes

were done as soon as possible after leaving the families. No formal interviews were carried out with the children. The researcher asked questions to the children about chosen objects (e.g., cartoon's characters, toys, their drawings, Disney costumes).

Talking About Children's Identities

Before examining the children's use of mothers' homeland media, a note is made on the discussions that evolved about the children's identity within the family. The definitions of identity are numerous, from Erikson's (1968) concept of identity as a stable psychological entity, rooted in childhood (involving values and biographic experiences) mainly influenced by local actors like family and peers to a late modern definition of identity advocated by, for example, Giddens (1991). For Giddens, identity formation is the result of a reflexive process, adjusting to various contexts and situations, and where the function of media as a symbolic resource is emphasised. Relating to Goffman's work (1959), the various roles a person inhabits are closely related to his or her identity. While roles are formed by language, behaviour pattern and habits; identity is a result of how more abstract cultural domains like view of the world, ideology, values have been internalized (Stier, 2004; cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1967). To live in a multiplicity of cultures is said to encourage a development of transcultural identities and translocal communities. It is stated that a person's identity has to switch (and thereby find a balance) between two worlds, between the traditionally bounded home and on the other hand the new society, with its demands and expectations (cf. Hall, 1992). See further section below how the studies dealt with the concept of identity.

Another key term in the two studies is the concept of culture. That culture and media are closely interwoven is stated by Martín-Barbero (1997, p. 50) "… the media have acquired a concrete institutional form and become a reflection of the culture". Through the media, many representations and stereotypes can be seen. Looking more specifically at its many-sided nature of culture, it may include a collective consciousness or systems of meanings and symbols, a medium in which experiences are organised through (e.g., language, cognitive schemata) and a tool of power or of defence in order to, for example, mark collective identities in conflicts. However, in this discussion it is important not to perceive people who share a certain culture as a homogenous group; variations due to individual experiences, class, gender, age etc. will always be discernible (Ehn & Löfgren, 1982, pp. 13-15). Werbner (1997, p. 229) stresses the problem of collective objectification and encourages us to consider the moral appropriateness of various group labels: "Such levels labels seem to capture the essence of a group, and this has lead to fierce debates about what ethnic minorities should call themselves, and be called". As for the two projects the labels given by the informants were used. Hence, both studies did not examine specific predetermined definitions of culture and identity. We approached the families in an inductive way; the participants themselves talked about their categorisation and perception of these terms. This approach led us to categorise the families' talk about children's identity along the aspects of doing, being and becoming. Figure 1 summarises the main aspects involved in the identity formation among Japanese and Swedish/Greek children according to the parents' and the children's talk and through photo-taking. The labels doing, being, and becoming will be the main analytical tool in the discussions that follow, both in relation to identities and how the mothers/parents would like to bring up their children in relation to their choices of mothers' homeland media, and how children actually use and perceive the media in their socialising and identity formation process. What are the similarities and differences in the two studies?

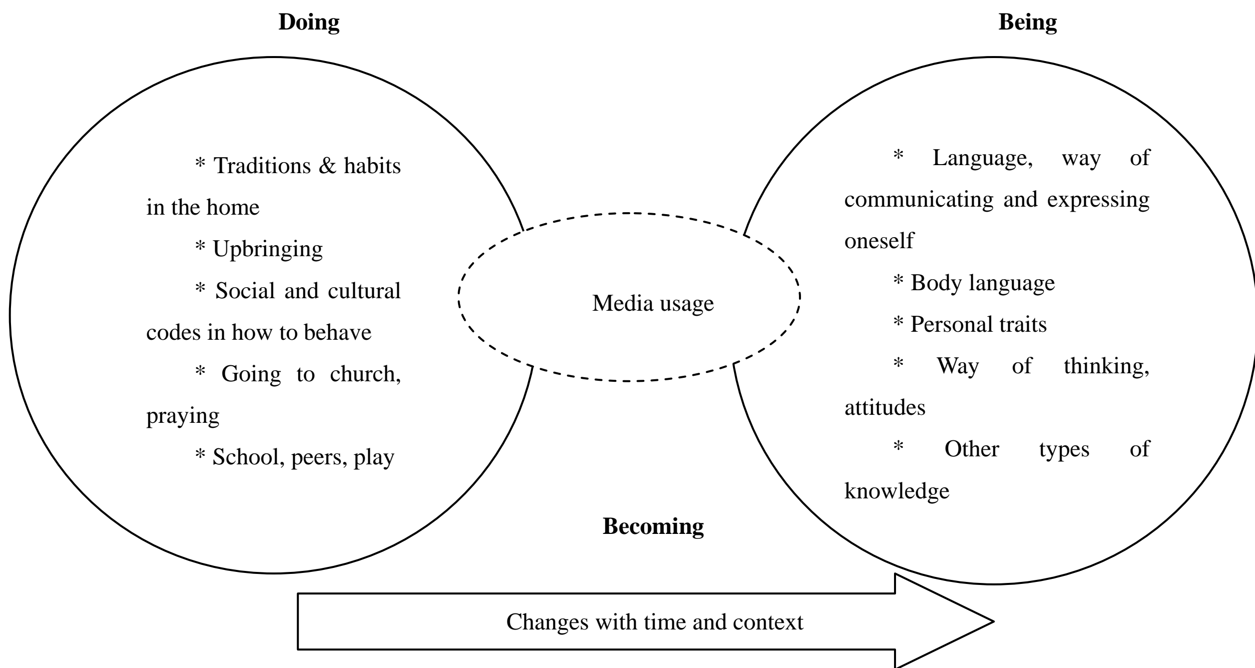

Figure 1. The doing, being, and becoming of children’s identity in U.K. and Greece.

Children’s “Doing, Being, and Becoming” in Everyday Life

Figure 1 shows that several markers of identity were mentioned, such as cultural, religious, and national (cf. Hall, 2001). While various markers of identity were expressed by the informants, it usually involved the interrelated features of being, doing, and becoming. Parallels can here be drawn to the social dimensions of ethnicity suggested by Fishman (1996). In our definition being refers to how, for example, a culture, nation, religion organizes a person’s experiences through, for example, language (both verbal and non-verbal), values, norms and cognitive schemata. “Doing”, on the other hand, involves a way of living, having a specific behaviour, which in turn may be related to, for example, rituals, traditions, values, culture. Finally, the term becoming stresses how some of the participating children’s identity markers may change with time and context.

Compared to the children, many of the Swedish mothers, who were brought up in Sweden and lived in Greece, said that they felt themselves caught between two worlds; that they will never be Greek and at the same time they did not feel 100% Swedish when in Sweden (see further Sjöberg, 2006). Even the Japanese mothers who would stay temporally in the U.K. became gradually to feel that they were different from people in Japan. Thus, the mothers in the two projects described their lives as “rootless” (cf. Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001). However, this “rootless” feeling was not discernible among the children in the two studies. While all the children in Greece have a Swedish mother, there was an agreement among the parents that the children were more Greek than Swedish. Two of the boys in the Greek study stated clearly that Greece is their home and that they did not care about Sweden. As for Japanese children, who were aged five to eight, they did not mention “homes” directly since they were too young to have such an awareness. Those young children, however, often used the phrases “return to Japan” since they knew they would return to Japan some day.

Several aspects related to doing were stated when discussing children’s identity (see Figure 1). When referring to their Swedish features, the Swedish school (which was attended once per week) and the

Scandinavian church in Athens were two fundamental places. The latter was not only a religious place but a meeting point for social and cultural activities. The importance of learning and preserving the mother tongue language (cf. being) was also stressed by the Japanese mothers, who sent their school-children to the Saturday Japanese schools in London where they were taught Japanese by the Ministry of Education in Japan. Another example of doing is how the children in Greece talked about having another way of living, for instance, travelling abroad on a regular basis in comparison to their Greek peers. The Japanese children did not talk about the differences except that they believed to be able to obtain the latest toys, episodes of the popular programmes, or sports (e.g., baseball in Japan, cricket or football in the U.K. for boys) from Japan. Another example of doing was how the Japanese mothers tended to encourage their daughters more to make non-Japanese friends at school than their sons. The main reason was because experiencing and knowing different cultures could be their future cultural capital (cf. Goodman, 1990). Boys, on the other hand, were minimised to play with non-Japanese peers, they tended to nourish becoming elements within their mothers' plot (goal of childrearing to become “international businessman”). Similar thoughts about peers and playing were not found in the Greek project.

There are also examples of how the children's body language differed from Greek peers'. This type of being characteristics was also seen among the Japanese children, perceived by their mothers. Due to their younger age the Japanese children did not realise such differences themselves, but the mothers often mentioned their children's being or becoming also from body language; perceived as “English” or “Other”.

Both Swedish and Japanese mothers made effort to maintain traditions (e.g., special food during certain events) in the home. By making their children “do” (behave along certain manners the mothers prefer), they tried to lead their children to become their ideal being/becoming. The Japanese mothers stressed their concern about the children's future in Japan after returning if they can adopt in Japanese society (such as being bullied due to lack of understanding of the Japanese society where “harmony” is respected, whereas the Western society values “individualism” (cf. Pang, 2000; Minami, 2000). Therefore, although the Japanese mothers encouraged their children to engage with certain elements of the foreign culture such as the language (within a certain form such as language acquisitions,) sense of fashions, and experiences of high culture (e.g., Royal Ballets in London), they did not appreciate the children's behaviours (i.e., doing) based on the Western “individualism” which would look strange in Japan (e.g., speaking loudly in English on buses or trains). Similar results were not found among Swedish mothers.

In the process of “becoming”, one can here refer to Goffman (1959) who talks about how people wear a wide range of different social costumes depending on the specific context (see becoming in Figure 1). It is stated that children who grow up with more than one culture are likely to develop a so called intercultural competence, i.e., to have the ability to alter not just between different languages but also various cultural norms, traditions, and behaviours etc. (cf. Stier, 2004). The interviews with the mothers/parents and their children in both projects indicated that, for example, whether the child stressed his/her Swedishness/Greekness or Japanese/Englishness shifted depending on the context and locality (i.e., becoming). The children move in and out, live between different cultures and change language and body language codes, which lead to their being and doing. The parents encouraged their children to be bilingual and bicultural as a valuable skill in their future adult life and as will be seen in the following section, mothers' homeland media usage becomes one means for this. “He just takes the best from each place. He never becomes the Greek male when he goes to Sweden” (mother to a 16-year-old boy). As for the Japanese children, they were still young, but surely they had already

developed an ability to switch two languages and even the ways of playing with their peers. For example, Japanese boys tended to play with more than two peers at the same time, and played *Beyblade* (a Japanese spinning toy with TV characters) whereas with English peers they played football in the garden or classical children's board games. An additional aspect of becoming in the two projects is how the children may become more rooted in Greece or Sweden and Britain or Japan as they grow older; indicating, once again, the contextual nature of a person's identity formation. Some examples of this process in which the media is related will be shown below.

Media Usage From Mothers' Homelands

This section focuses on how media from the mothers' homelands played a role in relation to the children's identities based on the interrelated features of "doing, being, and becoming". Media consumption is said to play an additional important part in children's formation of identities (cf. Bachmair, 1990). Looking at today's media's distribution, national boundaries have become increasingly ambiguous in global flows such as the impact of various transnational media (e.g., satellite television and the Internet) on contemporary life. Screberny-Mohammadi, Screberny, Winseck, McKenna, & Boyd-Barrett note (1997, p. xii) "… we can suggest that patterns of social interaction and information flows are increasingly occurring across national boundaries to form new bases of political and cultural identity". But at the same time the importance of locality and nationality cannot be ignored. The distinction between global and homeland media is not an easy one and we might in fact question this distinction. Several studies have, for example, shown how international television programmes are rooted and associated with "local" meanings among a global audience (cf. Liebes & Katz, 1990; Drotner, 2001).

In both projects, different media such as books, magazines, TV programmes, films, toys with TV characters, etc. appeared in the children's photographs and in their interviews. As for photos involving mothers' homeland media only one photo, taken by a 16-year-old girl, in the Greek project showed Swedish media (books), i.e., media which are produced in Sweden, in Swedish. But when talking to the children about their use of Swedish media variations were found due to personal interests or tastes which is part of their being. As for the latter, those children who were most inclined to utilize different Swedish media are also the ones who talked about perceiving oneself more as Swedish or Swedish/Greek and the importance of going to Sweden every year (i.e., the Swedish features of "doing, being, and becoming" were most prevalent). The Swedish media most frequently mentioned among the children were video films, books, the children's magazine *Kamratposten*, music, comics, and Swedish communities on the net.

The Japanese case shows similar tendencies even though the children were too young to verbally associate such media from Japan with their identities. The photos which the children took showed their interests—toys with popular Japanese cartoon characters such as *Pokemon, BeyBlades, Hello Kitty* etc., which is also part of their being and doing. It is clear that these symbolic forms from Japan were very significant for them. That is, they said taking pictures of their "important" objects, "This is my most favourite or important toy without mixing with non-Japanese objects" (e.g., accessories from England, Lego, books, & Disney products). Not only watching Japanese programmes (either in Japanese via videos from Japan or a JSTV [a Japanese satellite TV station in the U.K.] or in English via Fox kids or Cartoon network on Sky), they read books, magazines, and comics in Japanese, which are published and originally produced/written in Japan, play related games such as *Pokemon* or *Mario Brothers* on gameboy, and checked prices of the latest toys in Japan over the Internet. Thus,

both studies have found that the children choose the media from their mothers' homeland positively and eagerly in their everyday lives. So through such media contents, how do they develop and negotiate their identities (becoming)?

Both the children and the parents in the Greek project stated that Swedish media had fulfilled an important role for the children to learn Swedish and by giving them an insight into Swedish culture and children's culture, which was admitted also by the Japanese mothers. To some extent, the reason why the Japanese mothers encouraged their sons to socialise themselves via the Japanese media products amongst Japanese peers is because they were able to learn how to respect "harmony" which is a virtue in Japan (cf. Goodman, 1990). Thus, media became a crucial means for the mothers reminding them of their bicultural backgrounds:

> My children have been pretty brainwashed when it comes to the Swedish language. Ever since they were babies, so to speak, they have gotten cassettes and tapes and everything with Swedish music, we have always read bedtime stories in Swedish. (Mother of a 13- and 14-year-old daughter and son)
>
> Mother: Nagging at you? Do you want me to nag at you? He has just learned the word from Japan.
>
> Nine-year-old son: No. I learned it from a comic.
>
> Mother: I guess they did not understand the [Japanese] word when they read the comic, and when they use the word in life, they learn…They learned Japanese culture through such comics and cartoons. In our daily life [in London], it is very difficult even when I explain to them. Through these cartoons or comics, they learn these things [rituals], too. (Mother of three children aged three, seven, and nine)

The children in the Greek project have become older and their mothers had less control of them. As a result they have come to choose the media which best fit in with their interests and taste, thereby reflecting the children's process of becoming. While the mothers had been keen on reading Swedish books to their children at a younger age, now most of the young participants preferred to read books in Greek as they perceived that to be much easier as they knew Greek much better (cf. being). As for the Japanese mothers, they organised "reading clubs" for their children. In addition, in order to encourage their children's literacy in Japanese, they even provided comics which were sold in Japanese book stores in London or on the site *Amazon*.

As have been stated before, it is not always easy to distinguish between global and homeland media. This can be seen in the mothers' attempt to, for example, make their children read a popular global media product such as *Donald Duck and Harry Potter*, just as long it was in Swedish or Japanese. This could also be seen in the choice of DVDs and videos, where the Swedish mothers believed that the contents did not have to be produced in Sweden such as *Disney films*, the main importance was that these were dubbed into Swedish. In the case of Japanese families, they tended to use *Disney films* to encourage their children learn more English words (cf. being). Thus, both studies show that such global media products (including the Japanese ones through which children can relate to a wider plethora of cultures) have been used in a flexible manner. All the children in the study have seen or read *Harry Potter*, but the ways of experiencing were varied: Some have, for example, been to cinema many times (English version), some watched on DVD in English/Greek, or in the U.K. project some watched the DVD produced in Japan dubbed in Japanese. As for the last case, it was mostly used when watching with their parents as family entertainment since most of the children were better at English than their mothers. Much research has been done on the usage of satellite television for immigrants in maintaining a link to the homeland (e.g., Aksoy & Robins, 2003). As for the Greek study, only one family subscribed to the Swedish satellite channel Swedish Television (SVT) *Europa* to keep up with Swedish events and to provide the children with Swedish programmes and to hear the language. They, conversely, did not show much interest in

the channel as they thought it contained mainly boring talk shows.

The element of being Japanese or seen as Japanese by having and knowing their cultural capital was also pursued and embedded by their non-Japanese peers (cf. Lemish & Bloch, 2004). The Swedish children, on the other hand, did not have such globally popular media products from Sweden which they could share with non-Swedish friends. The Japanese children, therefore, distinguished between and showed different meanings of global Japanese media from non-Japanese ones to them can reassure their being. For example, a family after coming back from holiday in Japan, her nine-year-old son did not watch *Beyblade* on *Sky* (dubbed in English, the episodes are far behind from Japan) any longer as it was perceived as old and boring. Their knowledge of the latest series in *Rangers* and other super-heroes such as *Ultraman* or *Pokemon*, provides them with additional sub-cultural capital compared to British peers (cf. Gill, 1998).

Peer Media: A Way of Socialising

"Friends" was a main theme among the photos in the Greek project, and their importance was also reflected in their Swedish media use. It became clear that various media products in their photos were important tools in socializing themselves. That the Japanese children did not take photos of their friends was probably due to the limited mobility caused by using the researcher's camera (at homes). And also, as the child grows older, the peer-group gains a greater importance and media comes to play a central role for young people in the formation and maintenance of social relations (cf. Suoninen, 2001).

For the children in both Greece and U.K. the Swedish/Japanese popular culture shared by peers in their mothers' homelands was important. However, due to the age gap between the two studies, different meanings and usages were discernable as will be seen below. Another difference between the studies was that for the Japanese children, some media from Japan can be also global, which was very convenient in the process of socialising. *Beyblade*, for example, became very popular amongst both Japanese and non-Japanese peers. These globally popular Japanese media products provide the Japanese children "Japaneseness". The children in Greece, however, tended to share Swedish produced media only amongst Swedish/Greek peers or Swedish friends and relatives. Thus, Japanese children developed their awareness of being "others" (Japanese) or "from Japan" by not only their parents but also by their non-Japanese peers who recognised the symbolic forms linking with Japan.

Furthermore, in their photos, the Japanese children never mixed non-Japanese toys with Japanese ones, saying, *those are from Japan*. This global Japanese media gave to them a sense of Japaneseness within their socialising space in London because they had opportunity to show off their cultural capital to their non-Japanese peers and thereby function as a marker of difference. Similar findings were seen in the Greek project, where the young informants mentioned how by knowing Swedish and Greek opened the door for more alternative sources of information compared to Greek peers. This additional information was gained by visiting Sweden but also by using Swedish media and, for example, reading about what Swedish peers think and discuss (cf. being).

As with the Japanese children, the young participants in the Greek study enjoyed watching Swedish produced films and they usually circulated them within the Swedish/Greek peer group in Greece. One might assume that this swapping of films becomes a part of their distinctive cultural capital, i.e., of being both Greek and Swedish, which is shared with the Swedish/Greek peer group. There were several reasons why Swedish films held their interest, also now when they are older. While learning Swedish (cf. being) had been the main

reason at a younger age, they appreciated the quality of Swedish produced films. In addition, the feeling of knowing the latest music or films is important to the children when visiting friends and family in Sweden for holiday. This can be related to the term being in Figure 1. In the same manner, the Japanese children, especially the boys, were very keen on the speed of obtaining the knowledge on the latest episodes or toys from Japan. The girls, on the other hand, were more influenced by their English friends. They seemed to feel that pop idols' sexy fashion and listening to the latest hits were regarded as ‘cool stuff. They, however, took more pictures of objects which signify Japaneseness (e.g., stickers' collection from Japan, or Hello Kitty's products, etc.).

While the young participants in the Greek project talked about a lack of interest in finding out about various social and political events in Sweden. On the other hand, they were all eager to know what issues Swedish peers discuss and what they think of, for example, religion (cf. being). This was either done by being members of Swedish communities on the internet or by subscribing the magazine *Kamratposten* for young people. A 16-year-old girl mentioned how she had read *Kamratposten* frequently and how it had become an important keyhole to get an insight into the daily life of Swedish peers:

> For example by reading *Kamratposten* then I know, have read that if you believe in God in Sweden then people can make fun of you, that's rare here, then it's strange if you say that you don't believe in God for example. That's not strange, it's not strange either to go to church and you don't feel shy to say that. (16-year-old girl)

Like the magazine *Kamratposten*, different communities on the internet may serve as an important link to Swedish youth. Thus, they have become sites for identifying, addressing and sharing various concerns and thereby constituting an additional means of the aspects being, doing and becoming in the identity process. Due to their younger age similar social usage of the internet was not seen among the Japanese children, who merely used the net for checking information about Japanese toys or cartoons.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has shown several examples of how the families talked about children's identity and the importance of mothers' homeland media for the children. Studying identities, and the role of media in this process, is very complex, which the framework of being, doing and becoming has shown. Even if the participating families lived in different social, national, economical and cultural context, several similarities are seen when discussing children's identity, which in this paper have been summarised with the labels being, doing and becoming. The informants' talks involved everything from traditions, how to behave, ways of thinking, and language skills. Furthermore, the relational nature of identity, being influenced by context and time, is stressed by the families. It is obvious that mothers' homeland media is only one of the elements that are used in the identity formation. But it is an important construction tool that is used, especially for the younger children, with the control of the mothers. The older children in the Greek project were more independent in their media choices, affected by their own tastes and interests. As they got older the importance of using mothers' homeland media for socialising with peers is evident, becoming increasingly interested in finding out what peers in Sweden think about certain issues. All the aspects mentioned when discussing children's identity show the complexity of identity. Some aspects are more prominent in one context, at a certain time, while other aspects are important in another situation etc.. Our comparative analysis emphasises the need to apply a contextual and relational perspective when we want to understand the roles of media in the process of forming identity. At least from our understanding after comparing our studies based on the framework being, doing, and

becoming, it can be argued that identities are not fixed or permanent; the aspects of being and doing are rooted in a specific time and context; on how the individual positions himself/herself in a certain location (which can also be a mediated one). Further research is needed to elaborate on these aspects and how different media are used in relation to these. This paper has focussed on the mothers' homeland media and the next step is to see the interrelation between this type of media and global, national and transnational ones in various contexts.

Re-examining the media usage in the two studies has suggested how people take meanings differently even though they can share the same media, i.e., global media. For instance, Swedish media provided the children with an important means to be updated on current teenage issues in Sweden, and made them feel more confident and less of a stranger in Sweden by knowing the Swedish popular culture. Thus, knowing global media products is not enough for Swedish families in Greece. It is assumed by the both mothers and children that Swedish produced media can provide its audiences with more appropriate values and a way of living that are in accordance with one's culture besides hearing one's mother tongue. This, however, for the Japanese families in London signified differently since both popular British and Japanese global media could play both roles as national and global media. The mothers' homeland media, however, in both studies, appeared as symbolic forms which can provide the children with markers of being different compared to Greek or British peers.

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