

Constructing collective meaning about risk on social media

Explorative study of risk-related discussions emerging in a closed Facebook group for immigrant women residing in Norway



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Abstract

This explorative study addresses the themes of immigration, social media and risk perception. It investigates how immigrant women in Norway construct collective meaning about various risks when they participate in online discussions of risk-related topics in a closed Facebook group. Two online discussions about Norwegian Child Welfare Service and about child immunization has been chosen for the analysis in this study. These discussions were interpreted as socially constructed risk discourses, where the risks were presented as complex and multidimensional social constructions. The analysis revealed that those discourses demonstrated nuanced and authentic images of the risks, positioned as a part of perceived social reality of the host country. Therefore, the findings of this study provide with an exceptional insight in how risk is viewed by this group of immigrant women as a socially constructed phenomenon.

The empirical findings were examined in the light of two socio-cultural theoretical perspectives on risk: Governmentality and Reflexive Modernity. These theories allowed to view the revealed risk constructions in connection to more general societal perspectives on risk as a part of everyday life in modern society.

This research project contributes to the expanding of scientific knowledge about immigrants' perceptions of risks in Norwegian society and their use of social media as a platform for collective sense making about those risks. The study provides with valuable practical and methodological implications for politicians, representatives of public agencies, managers and risk researchers.

Key words: risk perception, immigration, social media, meaning construction, Reflexive modernity, Governmentality, internet research.

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“What we know about the world is simply the outcome of the arbitrary conventions we adopt to describe the world”

(Turner and Samson, 1995)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
1.1	Background	3
1.2	Problem Statement	5
1.3	Literature Review	6
1.4	Structure of the Thesis	7
2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	8
2.1	Risk as a social construction	8
2.2	Reflexive Modernity and Risk	9
2.2.1	<i>Structuration Theory of Giddens</i>	9
2.2.2	<i>Reflexive Modernization and “Risk Society”</i>	11
2.3	Governmentality and Risk	14
3	METHODOLOGY	17
3.1	Social Media as a Research Field and a Research Tool	17
3.2	Research Strategy and Design	18
3.2.1	<i>Case Study</i>	18
3.2.2	<i>Description of the Group</i>	19
3.2.3	<i>The structure of the discussions</i>	20
3.3	Data Collection	22
3.3.1	<i>Sampling of Discussions</i>	22
3.3.2	<i>Observation</i>	24
3.3.3	<i>Interview</i>	25
3.3.4	<i>Relationship between the Researcher and the Field of Study</i>	26
3.4	Data Analysis	29
3.5	Ethical Considerations	30
3.6	Credibility and Transparency of the research	33
4	EMPIRICAL FINDINGS	34
4.1	Discussion about Norwegian Child Welfare Service	35
4.1.1	<i>Introduction</i>	35
4.1.2	<i>Barnevern as an expert system</i>	37
4.1.3	<i>Barnevern as a power system</i>	38
4.1.4	<i>Power, Police and Trauma</i>	41
4.1.5	<i>“Playing by the rules” - Conforming to internalized demands of the expert system</i>	44
4.1.6	<i>Lack of information, trust and taboo</i>	47
4.1.7	<i>Fear and emotionality</i>	50
4.1.8	<i>Concluding comments</i>	52

4.2	The Discussion about risk of Vaccination/Child Immunization.....	54
4.2.1	<i>Introduction</i>	54
4.2.2	<i>Dual character of the risk and the problem of choice</i>	55
4.2.3	<i>Crossing borders between risky and safe locations (spaces)</i>	57
4.2.4	<i>Borders of the body and fear</i>	60
4.2.5	<i>Trust, information and experts</i>	62
4.2.6	<i>Consequences, responsibility and blame</i>	68
4.2.7	<i>Concluding comments</i>	72
5	DISCUSSION	73
5.1	Summarizing findings	74
5.1.1	<i>The discussion about barnevern</i>	74
5.1.2	<i>The discussion about vaccination.</i>	75
5.1.3	<i>What is risk?</i>	77
5.2	Knowledge as a power. Applying the concept of Governmentality.....	78
5.2.1	<i>The power of expert discourse</i>	78
5.2.2	<i>Local discourse vs expert discourse</i>	80
5.3	Reflexive modernity: experts, traditions and trust.....	81
5.3.1	<i>Distrust in expert knowledge and a problem of pseudo-expertise</i>	81
5.3.2	<i>Individual responsibility for vaccination and interconnectedness of different societal levels of risk in global risk society</i>	83
5.3.3	<i>Faceless commitment to absent experts and trust in “real experts”</i>	84
5.3.4	<i>Societal profits vs individual consequences.</i>	85
5.3.5	<i>Family as a part of individual identity-project</i>	86
5.3.6	<i>Expert knowledge vs traditions</i>	87
5.3.7	<i>Trauma, trust and unrecognized failures of the system</i>	89
6	CONCLUSIONS	90
6.1	Contributions	91
6.2	Implications	92
6.3	Further research	93
	REFERENCES	94

Appendix A. Reply from NSD

Appendix B. Table template used for the analysis

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The construction of the risk of barnevern	53
Figure 2. The construction of the risk of vaccination.....	73

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

What do such phenomena as immigration, risk perception and social media have in common?

This study has been conducted with an ambition to shed light on the relationship among these three phenomena, using a perspective of societal safety and security. Our world is becoming more global, and both immigration and social media contribute to this process (Van Hear, 2010, p.1532; Conversi, 2012, p.1360). People move thousand kilometers away from their home countries, bringing with them their cultures, beliefs, knowledges and ways of living, and thus contributing to the diversity in the host countries. At the same time, with the help of modern communication technologies, like social media, one does not need to come outside of one's own house to meet new people (Markham & Baym, 2009, p.x). One can stay in touch no matter location and distance, share information, express opinion and communicate with relatives, friends and strangers in real time mode. Social media make the world smaller, because geographical distances and national borders are not that significant anymore for people to communicate with each other (Bacigalupe & Cámara, 2012, p.1427).

Some risk theorists, like Ulrich Beck and Antony Giddens, stress the importance of globalization for understanding of the risks in modern societies (Lupton, 2013, p.77). At the moment when they wrote their main works about risk society, internet was still not widely available and the main social media platforms, like Facebook (Kosinski et.al., 2015, p.543) and Twitter (Murthy, 2011, p.780), were not launched yet. However, in the beginning of 1990s, Giddens in his theoretical claims about reflexive modernity stressed the importance of time-space separation of social interactions in modern society, when social actors do not need to be at the same place at the same time to interact (Kaspersen, 1995, p.122). In his writings about globalization, he, among other issues, highlights the development of communication technologies, resulting in creation of a new, global world, interconnected across national borders (ibid, p.132). These features are even more obvious nowadays when social media are widely used by both individuals and organizations across the world.

On the other side, the phenomenon of international migration was not particularly emphasized by Beck, Giddens or other main risk theorists. Most of the contemporary risk theories seem to neglect this aspect, assuming that Western society consists of homogeneous, ethnically-neutral population. In his recent writings, Giddens expresses skepticism towards the process of globalization and its impacts for societal security, because that led to the activation of 'fundamentalists', who struggle for preserving the boundaries between nation-states,

religions, ethnicities and ways of life (Lupton, 2013, s.102). Otherwise, immigration and its' implication for social change, are not highlighted as a part of his 'risk society' concept. Even the cultural theory of risk, which is based on the notions of values and "world views" as an integrative part of risk concept (Renn, 2008, p.38), does not pay much attention to the multicultural and multiethnic character of modern society. Meanwhile, recent statistical data show that the amount of people who are moving permanently to new countries is constantly growing (OECD, 2017, p.9). Norway is not an exception from this trend. In 2017, the number of persons with non-Norwegian ethnic background was over 16 percent of country's population, while in Oslo, the whole 33 percent of the population were foreigners (The Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2017). Therefore, the population of Norway is not culturally homogenic anymore, but consists of representatives of different ethnicities, religions and cultures. This may have important implications for the issues of risk governance and risk communication in the society, since risks may be perceived and responded to differently by the minorities in comparison to ethnic Norwegians, though this aspect is not widely acknowledged among experts, politicians and general public.

Immigration is an important political issue, which is paid much attention to in Europe and worldwide (Sandovici, Jakobsen and Strabac, 2012, p. 115; Cadarian & Albertson, 2014, p. 134). In Norway, immigration is politically connected to the notion of integration (Hagelund, 2002, p.402). Nevertheless, those problems are usually understood and approached from the perspective of ethnic majority, and the challenges of "cultural relativism" (Lupton, 2013, p. 80) in relation to how risks are understood in different socio-cultural contexts, are generally underestimated. Moreover, the problem with integration of minorities is seldom approached as a risk-related issue. Perspective of risk on the problem of integration can help decisionmakers and stakeholders to comprehend the challenges and threats immigrants meet with when they move to Norway. Risk and social vulnerability may represent constrains for the integration process, but those may be insufficiently recognized by representatives of ethnic majority. Therefore, immigration should also become a subject of risk-related and safety-related inquiries. It would be especially valuable to explore and describe how different immigrant groups perceive the risks which exist in the host societies. It is also important to understand interconnections between immigrants' risk perceptions and their constructions of social reality, because this understanding may provide with the clue to the problem of integration as well as other social problems related to immigration. In the era of social media as a widespread communication tool and a platform for social interaction, online forums,

chats and groups may provide a new alternative for researchers to access the risk discourses which emerge and circulate in relatively closed immigrants' milieus. Social media inquiries can also provide with the insight in how the immigrants use internet-based communication technologies to explore and exchange risk information and to construct their understandings of social reality in the host country.

1.2 Problem Statement

Immigrant groups in the modern liberal society should be viewed as stakeholders with their values, concerns and agency, not just subjects for top-down intervention and governing. Therefore, knowledge about immigrants' perspectives on risks should be to greater extent included in more general process of inclusive risk governance. This research project has been conducted with the aim to generate this type of knowledge through the exploration of how a group of immigrants construct their meaning system about particular risks in Norwegian society in the context of social media. This context is chosen deliberately as a space which provides unique access for me as a researcher to explore the process of collective sense-making. It is supposed that social media contribute to the changes in society due to the growing number of users and their desire to express their opinion (Hewitt, 2012, in Mou & Lin, 2014, p. 611). My own experience with the use of social media through the participation in several discussion groups for immigrants on Facebook was influential for this choice. As a member of those groups, I often observed and participated in online discussions of risk-related topics that emerged there. Since I have been studying societal safety and security and professionally interested in risk as a phenomenon, my attention was continually attracted to the fact that those Facebook groups are gradually becoming important platforms not just for social interaction among immigrants, but also for sharing information and creation of collective meaning about various risks. Those observations shaped my interest for the topic and inspired me to engage in this research. The main purpose of this project has been to explore and describe how immigrants use discussion groups on social media to explore and exchange their opinions about various risks they meet in their everyday life. It has been decided to limit this explorative study to investigation of the process of meaning creation and construction of risk images by female immigrants when they participate in online discussions on a closed Facebook group. On this basis, the following problem statement was formulated:

How is the meaning about various types of risks constructed by immigrant women in the process of online discussions in a closed Facebook group?

It was decided to address those collective meaning constructions as examples of online discourses, where discourse is understood as *“a defined and coherent way of representing and discussing of people, events, ideas or things, as expressed in a range of forums, from everyday talk to the popular media and the internet for expert talk and texts”* (Lupton, 2013, p.240). Due to the explorative character of the study and relatively loose and flexible style of research design, it was difficult to formulate concrete research questions prior to working actively with data collection and analysis. While conducting this research I was particularly interested in answering the following research questions:

- 1) *How can the discussions between immigrant women on closed Facebook group be characterized?*
- 2) *What are the main components (themes) of the discourses/meaning constructions?*
- 3) *How can the constructions/discourses be attributed to the immigrant status of the participants, their shared values and world views?*

Both the problem statement and the research questions are formulated as descriptive since the purpose of this explorative study is to provide initial description of the phenomenon of collective meaning construction about various risks in online settings.

1.3 Literature Review

There is a quite extensive amount of social inquiries about international migration, where the phenomenon is examined from different perspectives. Van Hear (2010) in his study attempts to develop theoretical explanations for immigration as a contributor to social transformation in receiving societies, where social change is not viewed as something negative or positive, but the author applies rather neutral position to it. In contrast, Bigo (2002) in his analysis of governmentality practices in western countries attempted to provide an explanation for the tendencies of framing immigration as a risk and a security problem in liberal societies. His hypothesis is based on the idea of political elites who continually struggle to maintain control over the territorial boundaries of nation-states with the assistance of modern globalized technologies of surveillance, and freedom is therefore framed as a subject to legal limitation because of security reasons (ibid, p. 65). Schmidt (2011) approaches the challenges of immigration in Denmark through the analysis of public and political discourses about transnational arranged marriages as a threat to national identity of the host society and emergence of legislative practices aimed to reach higher level of control over private spheres of lives of immigrants living in Denmark. In their experimental study, Gadarian & Albertson

(2014) used issue of immigration to examine how exposure to negative or positive information about the topic influences anxiety level of citizens. Several immigration-related inquiries have been conducted where the authors pay special attention to the phenomenon of transnational family, which emerged as a result of immigration tendencies, and some of those connect this phenomenon to the use of social media by immigrants in order to maintain close contact with family members who live in different countries and continents (Bacigalupe & Ca´mara, 2012; Madianou, 2016). Dekker and Engbersen (2014, p. 414) came to the conclusion in their qualitative study that social media contribute to facilitation of migration, because they provide immigrants with access to knowledge and information from other migrants, as well as opportunity to build a network of weak and latent ties.

When it comes to the studies of risk perception, the idea about the potential of nonexpert sources of information and informal social interactions to influence individual’s risk perception is not new and has been explored by for example Brenkert-Smith, Dickinson, Champ & Flores (2013, p.801). Gandy Jr (2001) studied relations between racial identity, use of traditional media and risk. Several studies are specifically focused on the phenomenon of social media as a source of risk information and a communication tool which may influence risk perception of individuals (Fellenor et. al., 2017; Westertman, Spence and Van Der Heide, 2014; Hilverda, Kuttschreuter and Giebels 2017; Mou & Lin, 2014; Robertson & Yee, 2016). All of these studies are quantitative inquiries with large number of informants, but without particular attention to the theme of immigration. These studies demonstrated, that there is a relation between the use of social media by lay people and their perceptions of risks.

My search of related studies, which address risk perception, social media and immigration in the same inquiry, has not provided me with satisfactory results. Therefore, I assume that this segment of knowledge has not been sufficiently investigated.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The paper starts with the introduction and presentation of the problem statement. The second chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework, followed by the methodology chapter which presents a detailed description of the research design, methods for data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations and the question of quality control of the research. Hereafter, the findings of the study are presented separately for each of the analyzed discussions. In the fifth chapter, the results are discussed in connection with the chosen

theoretical perspectives. The paper is culminated with conclusions and recommendation for further research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Risk as a social construction

Risk in this paper is primary understood as a social construction or a “mental representation” (Renn, 2008, p.2) of the uncertainty (Aven & Renn, 2010, p.10) about potential dangers and harms existing in social and material world (Lupton, 2013, p. 43). What is considered as dangerous and risky depends on how the problem is viewed in the society, how it is articulated by politicians and interest groups and treated in mass media, but also how different perceptions are discussed by smaller groups of lay people. Therefore, risk is not seen as an objective measure of uncertainty, but as an interpretative and selective (Renn, 2008, p.3, Zinn, 2008, p.6) phenomenon, which may be viewed and assessed differently. That doesn't mean that the dangers, discussed by the participants of the Facebook group, are not “real” and cannot materialize, or that the participants' mental models of social reality cannot be viewed as rational. By applying social constructionist position to risk (Lupton, 2013, p.43), I attempt to draw attention to *socio-cultural* dimensions of risk as an important contribution to a more holistic approach to risk governance in modern society. In this case, it is irrelevant to emphasize the degree of “correspondence” between physical world, expert risk assessments and public values, perceptions and concerns (Renn, 2008, p.3). Rather than arguing, whether the participants' mental representations of risks should be viewed as “biased” or “accurate” understandings of objective reality, I have chosen to assume that all types of knowledge about risks – both “lay” and “expert” - are shaped by underlying socio-cultural contexts (Lupton, 2013, p.43, Tulloch & Lupton, 2003, p.12). Thus, risk can be understood as “*a product of social experience and social processing of risk signals*” (Kasperson & Kasperson, 2005, p.225). Due to those assumptions, risk in this paper is defined as:

“(...) uncertainty about and severity of the events and consequences (or outcomes) of an activity with respect to something that humans value”

Aven and Renn (2010, p.8)

This definition conceptualizes risk as a mental construction of uncertainty/knowledge dimension (Aven and Renn, 2010, p.9) and connects this construction to subjective socio-cultural aspects of values. Therefore, the definition covers all possible variations of risk

constructions, also those dynamic and contextual models of risks, constructed by lay persons in the process of social interaction on social media.

In this paper I have chosen to use theoretical frames of “risk society” concept of Beck and Giddens, and the approach of “governmentality” based on the philosophy of Foucault. I do realize that other theoretical frameworks, and especially Cultural Theory of risk, could provide an interesting and fruitful perspective for theoretical examination of the findings of this study. It is difficult to provide a clear argumentation for why I prefer those two theoretical frames, and not the others. Besides my personal interest in how those theories conceptualize risk in modern society at both individual and societal levels, it is also prominent that both “risk society” and “governmentality” pay more attention to the changing role of expert knowledge in modern society than, for example, “cultural” perspective (Lupton, 2013, p.117), and the theme of expert knowledge is relatively central for the empirical findings of this project.

2.2 Reflexive Modernity and Risk

The work with this paper was in general very much inspired by Giddens’s sociology and especially his notions about risk in modern society. This influenced the way the field of study was approached, the choices which were made about the collection of data and the focus on particular aspects in the analysis of the findings. In spite of the exploratory character of this research project and my desire to approach the fieldwork as open-minded as possible, some theoretical assumptions were important to have (Blakie, 2010, p. 124). Giddens’s theoretical views were not used as direct guidelines in this research project, but more as a *meta-theory*, which is defined by Turner (1991, in Blakie, 2010, p 138) as a set of underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions.

2.2.1 Structuration Theory of Giddens

Giddens’s understandings of ‘reflexive modernity’ and its’ implications for risk, are generally based on his theory of structuration (Renn, 2008, p.28). It was developed as an attempt to resolve the conflict between two main traditions in sociology: structure/system-focused and agency-focused approaches (Kaspersen, 1995, pp.48-49). This conflict, or ‘dualism’, is based on traditional separation of structure and agency in social theories (Jones and Karsten, 2008, p.129), which has its roots in deeper philosophical questions about objectivism and subjectivism when acquiring scientific knowledge about social phenomena (Kaspersen, 1995, p.43).

In his structuration theory, Giddens tries to overcome this dualism by claiming that structure and agency exist in “mutually constitutive duality” (Jones and Karsten, 2008, p.129) or ‘synergy’ (Renn, 2008, 28). This means that structure and agency should be considered not as separate elements, but as interdependent parts of structuration process, where human actions produce and are produced by structure at the same time. Giddens introduces a concept of *social practice* to define this duality (Kaspersen, 1995, p.52.) and conceptualizes society as a set of social practices which happen across time and space (ibid, p. 134). Agency is understood as a process or “flow” without any concrete starting and ending points. Any action emerges from complex context of previous actions, and at the same time, it shapes the future actions and choices for oneself and others (Renn, 2008, p.28). Thus, social structures are both enabling and constraining at the same time: they provide members of society with the opportunities to act, but also constrain the action. Social context is an important aspect of structuration theory and has implications for empirical research in social sciences (Jones and Karsten, 2008, p. 135).

Human agents are considered by Giddens as *knowledgeable* (Kaspersen, 1995, p.53), as they are aware of how society works and able to reflect on the interdependence between their actions and the society (Jones and Karsten, 2008, p.133). Giddens distinguishes among three types of that knowledge. One of them refers to *practical consciousness*, which is attributed to routines and tacit knowledge, and is the main basis for production and reproduction of social life (Kaspersen, 1995, p.55). In opposite to that, *discursive consciousness* is a type of knowledge agents can “put into words” (Jones and Karsten, 2008, p.33) and refers to agent’s discursive capacity (Kaspersen, 1995, p.54). Kaspersen (1995, p.54) explains it as a discursive reflexivity about an action, which can result in changes of the social practice. The third type of knowledge refers to “unconscious sources of cognition” (Giddens, 1979, p.5 cited by Jones & Karsten, 2008, p.133), as Giddens suggests that not all the motives are conscious (Kaspersen, 1995, p.59). Practical consciousness and unconscious sources of cognition constitute a basic system, aimed to safeguard agent’s self-identity and self-worth (Jones and Karsten, 2008, p. 135; Kaspersen, 1995, p.59, Lupton, 2013, p.105), which Giddens defines as *ontological security*. Routines and practices which are repeated day by day, unconsciously or guided by practical consciousness, give us feeling of safety and continuity and help us to restore the sense of ontological security (Kaspersen, 1995, p.60).

The main ideas and aspects of structuration theory can be useful for understanding of risk as a part of modernity and explaining humans’ behavior and actions when they face various risks

in their everyday life. Thus, the main ontological assumption in this paper is that both agency and structure have implications for social practice in general, and with respect to risk in particular. The concept of the three levels of human agents' knowledgeability is also an important epistemological assumption for studying the process of meaning construction on social media. The notion of *ontological security*, which is constantly threatened by contemporary risks, and human agents' attempts to restore it (Renn, 2008, p. 29), is also considered as a crucial concept in this paper. Since risk refers to uncertainty about future outcomes of our actions (Aven & Renn, 2010, p.8), it is something that can force people to reflect discursively upon their and others' actions, in order to assess the risk and understand how to deal with it. It can be particularly connected to the situations when people engage in discussions on social media about the risks they must deal with. Participation in such discussions can be understood as a transition from *practical* to *discursive consciousness*. Agent's awareness about riskiness of the action (or situation) makes it outstanding, distinct from the routines, and presses individual to search for explicit, discursive meaning of the action in order to maintain one's own ontological security (Kaspersen, 1995, pp. 58-59).

2.2.2 *Reflexive Modernization and "Risk Society"*

The theory of reflexive modernization is chosen as one of the main theoretical references in this paper because of its focus on the relationship between changes in world society on the global, macro-level and respectively changes in the everyday life of individuals and social groups on the local, micro-level (Renn, 2008, p.27). Reflexive modernization theory is complex, extensive and has its shortcomings (Lupton, 2013, pp. 111-112). However, it seems advantageous to use the theoretical framework of "risk society" with its conceptual vocabulary for exploration of the process of meaning construction by a group of immigrants in the virtual space of social media. It is not intended to test the propositions of the theory empirically, as it has been done by Tulloch and Lupton (2003). The framework is thought to be applied in the same reciprocal manner as Layder (1998, p. 20) suggests using the existing theoretical concepts during analysis of empirical findings in his adaptive theory approach.

Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens are known as the main contributors to the theory of reflexive modernity and "risk society" concept (Lupton, 2013, p.77). In this paper, the main emphasis is put on Giddens's conceptualization of impacts of reflexive modernity risks on individuals' everyday life and Beck's ideas of individualization and reflexive biography. Those issues are viewed in connection to Giddens' Theory of Structuration, as it was presented in the previous section.

Individualization of lifestyles is one of the main characteristics of “risk society”, where individuals are expected to produce their own biography and assigned more personal responsibility for the choices they make about their future life course (Lupton, 2013, p. 101).

Beck considers that as an outcome of fundamental changes in the role of social class, employment and gender in modern society (Zinn, 2008, p.21; Lupton, 2013, p.91). Vanishing of the borders between social classes, changes in male-female roles, alteration of institutions of marriage and family, transformation of employment patterns and less stable labor-marked have led to the growing number of opportunities an individual has to deal with while choosing her life path (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003, p.4). Thus, individual’s life course is perceived as more flexible and dependent on one’s own decision making. Beck defines that as a “reflexive biography” – a self-chosen, rather than socially predetermined, life trajectory (Lupton, 2013, pp.89-91). Talking about freedom to choose one’s own life course as an achievement of modernity, Beck (1992, in Lupton, 2013, p.90) highlights the negative aspects of it, because individualization has led to the “*disintegration of the certainties*” of traditional society. Individuals have to make decisions about their life in the absence of traditional ways of coping with uncertainty, like family, marriage or life-time employment (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003, p. 62). At the same time, they are expected to conform to the demands of modern society (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995 in Lupton, 2013, p.90), internalized through the culture of mass consumption and spread with the help of mass media (Beck, 1992, p.105). Individuals’ decision making even about the most intimate spheres of life is closely connected to the notion of risk, because life’s disturbances, like unemployment, marital breakdown or illness, are conceptualized as the outcomes of individuals’ choices, rather than vagaries of fate or results of broader social processes (Lupton, 2013, p.92).

Giddens’s understanding of individualization is generally similar to that of Beck’s (Lupton, 2013, p.102) but has some distinct features. For Giddens, individualization is closely connected to the concepts of self-identity and lifestyle (Kaspersen, 1995, p.143). “The self” in modern society is seen by Giddens as an individualized, reflexive life-time project, rather than a fixed entity, which is predetermined by extern social frames (Lupton, 2013, p.101). Self-identity is perceived as a process, where the self is produced and reproduced constantly through the reflexive choice of individualized lifestyle. Physical body is viewed as a part of “self-identity” project and is approached as much more prone to human intervention and influence through “reproductive technologies, genetic engineering and surgical procedures” (Lupton, 2013, p.102).

In his analysis of modernity, Giddens is focused on the underlying aspects of individualization. He examined such phenomena as time, space and place, modernity's abstract systems and the changing role of traditions and expert knowledge in the post-industrial society. On one hand, individualization of lifestyles is explained by Giddens as a result of breakdown of traditions as a basis for our actions (Kaspersen, 1995, p.144). In modern society, people cannot rely on traditions in constructing their life courses, but have to engage in continuous risk assessment process, comparing various alternatives and choosing among them according to the perceived impact on their life in the future (Lupton, 2013, p.101). Thus, their choices are more dependent on reflexivity than on traditions. On the other hand, individualization is connected by Giddens to the aspects of "time-space separation" and "disembedding" character of modern expert systems (Kaspersen, 1995, pp. 122-123). Time-space separation is connected to flexibility of the concepts of time and space in modern society. Due to technological progress they are not dependent on each other, as it was in traditional society, and social interactions may find place across time and space. When describing disembedding character of modern expert systems, Giddens means that those systems have become more distant to their target users as they are operated by "absent others" (Lupton, 2013, p.97). They are lifted out of the local context and placed into a more globalized space for social interactions (Kaspersen, 1995, pp.123-124) Thus, disembeddedness of the abstract systems and time-space separation are interconnected and create a variety of contexts for individualized decision making.

Both Giddens and Beck underline the fundamental changes which happened with the society in the late modernity, both at micro and macro level, and Giddens was particularly interested in the changes in intimate spheres of individuals' lives like family, marriage and friendship (Kaspersen, 1995, p.146, Lupton, 2013, p.106). Giddens didn't pay much attention to the changes in children-parents relations in the late modernity but was more concerned with marriage and intimate relations between adults. Nevertheless, he introduced the concept of *ontological security* – an emotional phenomenon, which is based on trust, and parent-child relationship is crucial for its formation (Lupton, 2013, p.105; Kaspersen, 1995, p.139). Ontological security refers to individuals' confidence "in the continuity of their self-identity and in constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens, 1990, cited in Lupton, 2013, p.105). People maintain ontological security with the help of routines and trust "*in the reliability of persons and things*", and that makes them able to

interact with the expert systems in spite of lacking insight in their functioning (Lupton, 2013, p.105).

Individualization of lifestyles is interconnected with the other characteristics of Reflexive modernization, and they are important to mention. The choice of individualized lifestyle is based on individuals' reflexivity and, therefore, closely connected to the increased pluralization of beliefs, values and convictions in modern western society, which resulted in the lack of clear overarching goals (Renn, 2008, p.27). The problem of variety of beliefs and values may also be connected to the emergence of the *self-culture politics* (Zinn, 2008, p.39) and growing demand for legitimization of the existing and proposed collective actions (Renn, 2008, p.27). In addition to that, "risk society" is also characterized by public distrust to the positivistic claims of scientific knowledge about technological progress as the only rational way to resolve social problems and to improve quality of human life (Renn, 2008, p.135; Lupton, 2013, pp. 87 and 100). More attention is paid to undesired side-effects of technological and social changes, and people have to deal with contradictory and competing claims of pluralized scientific camps (Renn, 2008, pp. 27-28). According to Giddens, lay people are accustomed to the disagreement among experts and, therefore, they have become more cynical and skeptical about scientific claims about existing risks (Lupton, 2013, p.100), since those cannot provide a reliable ground for decision making at individual level:

"Risks of contaminated foods, mysterious viral infections, and the stresses and strains of insecure jobs, unemployment and unhappy marriages must be dealt with reflexively as individuals stand alone, looking for security in the face of uncertainty and the implosion of often conflicting information."

(Annandale, 2014, p.49)

Therefore, individualized decisions of lay people about the risks they face in their private lives should be seen in connection with more global changes in the modern society. Individualization may be assumed as a "private side of globalization" (Lupton, 2013, p.89), and the main paradox of modernity is that people experience greater uncertainty about their life in spite of getting more personal control over it (ibid, p.92).

2.3 Governmentality and Risk

The choice of the perspective of governmentality as a theoretical reference in this project was mainly determined by the empirical findings. In this section I will refer to the main assumptions of this theoretical perspective.

Foucault, one of the most famous contemporary philosophers, was not particularly attentive to the concept of risk in his writings (Lupton, 2013, p.114), but his interest in the relationship between scientific knowledge and power (Turner & Samson, 1995, p.18) and his ideas of *Governmentality* as a modern approach to social regulation and control (Lupton, 2013, p.115) were influential for several poststructuralist risk theorists and researchers (O'Malley, 2008, p.57).

One of the main aspects of Governmentality is the “*multiplicity of power relations*” (ibid, p.53) where power is conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon. Foucault particularly distinguished between traditional “*sovereign power*” and “*biopower*”, where the first is seen as direct and repressive, while the last is defined as diffuse, productive and normalizing (Annandale, 2014, p.36 and 39). The emergency of “*biopower*” may be connected to the growth of liberal ideas in Western societies and the demand of governmental technologies with minimal direct intervention in the private life of citizens (Lupton, 2013, p.115). The ability of individuals to self-disciplining and self-governing lies in the core of the concept of biopower, which “*operates through norms and technologies which shape the mind and body*” (Annandale, 2014, p.38). Therefore, individuals are positioned as active subjects, capable of “self-regulation” and “*interested in self-improvement, seeking happiness and healthiness*” (Lupton, 2013, p.119). Biopower is emerging in connection with “technologies of domination” and “technologies of the self” (Warin, 2011, p.26). Expertise and scientific knowledge play crucial role in the exertion of biopower. As Turner and Samson (1995, p. 20) proposed:

“For Foucault, western society has been increasingly regulated (by the state, the police force, professional associations and social workers); it has been more and more dominated by the standards of reason (through the applications of science to everyday life).”

Foucault was particularly interested in how expert knowledge is transformed and mediated to the population through the concept of discourses - “invented, reflecting or embodying governmental understandings of the way things are” (O'Malley, 2008, p.54). Scientific knowledge therefore is not viewed as objective, but as normative and dependent on the “aspects of the social, political, and institutional order” (Brain, 1990, p 905). Scientific discourse for Foucault “is simply a collection of metaphors”, while scientific knowledge “is a form of narrative” (Turner & Samson, 1995, p.17) “in which individuals are told a story of “truth” (Bell, 2011, p. 103). As the most central idea of governmentality, scientific knowledge

in form of discourses circulates in the society and forms the basis for subjective and institutional production of meaning, so power is understood as a discursive concept (Zinn, 2008, p.192). Foucault claimed that *“there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge”* (in Bell, 2011, p.104). In connection to that, knowledge about risk may be understood as a form of discursive power, that defines what is risky and how the society should deal with the risks in the most rational and socially desirable way (Zinn, 2008, p. 2008).

In the framework of Governmentality, risk is viewed as a *“technology of government”* (O’Malley, 2008, p.57) With the help of scientific knowledge and institutional governmental agencies, different aspects of human life are “problematized” and presented as risks – analytical categories which need to be monitored, calculated and regulated (Lupton, 2013, pp. 117-118; O’Malley, 2008, pp. 57-58). Thus, risk is viewed as instrument for exerting biopower, maintaining surveillance and as a justification of governmental interventions with the “risk groups” (Lupton, 2013, p. 127). The concept of risk in governmentality is closely connected to the notion of *“normalization”* and applied to the level of populations (Lupton, 2013, p.119). Experts and scientist are monitoring and collecting data about populations in order to provide a description of deviance and normality (Lupton, 2013, p.117; Annandale, 2014, p. 39). Less attention is paid to the unique, individualized characteristics of each concrete case, and the main purpose of scientific data collection about populations is to identify “risk factors” which are “liable to produce risk” (Lupton, 2013, pp.124-125; O’Malley, 2008, pp.57-58). Since risk is viewed as a combination of factors rather than attributed to concrete individuals (Castel, 1991, in Lupton, 2013, p.123), the experts are operating with concepts of “risk groups” and “risk populations” when identifying individuals “at risk”. According to Lupton (2013, p.125):

“To be designated at risk is to be located within a network of factors drawn from the observation of others, to be designated as part of a “risk population”.

At the same time, risk in the concept of governmentality is viewed as a “moral technology” (ibid, p.118), and risk-avoidance is conceptualized as a moral obligation of individuals to take care of themselves (and their families/ children) through their active engagement in “self-control” and “self-improvement”. To demonstrate that, Lupton (2013, pp. 120-122) draws on an example with pregnant women in contemporary society, who voluntary engage in “self-

policing” activities to reduce health risks of their future children. This example may be widened to more general level of parent – child relations.

For Foucault, the desire of liberal governments in modern western societies to achieve higher level of social order through empowerment of the citizens is not assumed as altruistic act of protecting natural liberty (Zinn, 2008, p.192). It is rather seen as a rationality to maximize wealth and productivity in a more effective way of cultivation of “artificial freedom” (ibid), by creating structures for effective “fabrication” of population, which is more utilizable and more amenable for profitable investment (Lupton, 2013, p.115).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Social Media as a Research Field and a Research Tool

As social networking has become one of the crucial parts of social life of millions of people, there is a growing body of social inquiries studying this relatively novel terrain (Kosinski et.al., 2015, p.543). Even though there is a huge pool of traditional research methods available for nowadays researchers, it is questionable if these “traditional” methodological approaches are in fact reliable to grasp the online reality. This problem was the main methodological challenge and concern of this study, and that is the reason for devoting a separate chapter for reflection about that.

Some researches define Facebook as an “ongoing database of social activity” (Wilson, Gosling and Graham, 2012, p.204), arguing that social media provide them with the unique access to “naturalistic behavioral” information (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p.220), and treating social media in a fairly instrumental way. According to Markham (in Baker, 2013, p.132), Internet can be understood in three complementary ways: as a *communicative medium*, as a *global network of connection* and as a *scene of social construction*. In this research project, social media are not considered solely as a research tool, which gives access to a huge amount of individuals’ meanings, readily presented in textual formats. I acknowledge that this Facebook group is also a scene of social construction, which both shapes and is shaped by the interactions among its members.

One of the crucial questions about social media, when it is used both as a research field and a research tool, is how to address the behavior that people show and the opinions they express in the settings of online interaction, in comparison to traditional face-to-face ways of socialization. This problem is especially relevant to my research, where the aim is to explore how meaning about different risks is constructed in the discussions in the Facebook group.

Some researchers argue that it is meaningless to differentiate and juxtapose “virtual” and “real” worlds since Internet has become an integrated part of contemporary social practice (Baker, 2013, p132). Another approach to the same problem is to consider social networking as a part of self-identity, where online and offline modes of being are viewed as two sides of the same process of *producing oneself* (Markham & Baym, 2009, pp. 61-65). Except special cases, such as online criminality, it is misleading to assess “online” identity as opposite to the “real”, “true” identity which appears in offline settings. It is more correctly to talk about different projections of the same identity. One is active in constructing the “self” both when participating in a face-to-face conversation about particular topic with a friend or a colleague and when discussing the same topic in the cyberspace of a Facebook group. Therefore, it is an important underlying assumption that there is no objective reason to treat the meanings expressed in virtual space as less valid and trustworthy than meanings expressed in more traditional settings of face-to-face conversation.

3.2 Research Strategy and Design

3.2.1 Case Study

A qualitative case study is chosen as a research strategy for this study. This choice has been made due to several reasons. For the first, the study was assumed to have an explorative character due to the lack of previous research on this topic. Even though Yin (2003, p.3) means that case study inquiry has a greater potential when applied for explanatory studies, I suppose that the flexibility of this research strategy and its holistic approach to the phenomena being studied (Mohn, 2008, p.1603, Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544), makes it especially advantageous for my exploratory research. Applying case study as a research strategy allows to explore the relationship between the phenomena of using social media by immigrants and the online meaning construction about the risks they meet in their everyday life, by drawing on several sources of evidence and by approaching this relationship within its complex context. That leads to the second reason for choosing the case study strategy. According to Yin (2003, p.13), this strategy is quite beneficial in situations when there are no clear boundaries between the phenomenon and the context, and as a result, the variables of interest are numerous. As Maaløe (1996, p. 31) defines it, a case study is an in-depth research strategy, which gives an opportunity to study human reactions and interactions in their natural settings. One of the main assumptions of this research project is that it is impossible to understand the process of meaning construction in discussions about various risk-related topics, without taking in account the context for the discussions.

Qualitative character of this case study means that the focus has been directed toward the qualitative aspects of the investigated phenomena, and empirical data were collected and analyzed with the help qualitative approach. This approach is chosen primarily because of the subjective, interpretative nature of the phenomenon of meaning construction on social media, which appeals to understanding, not calculation at the first place.

When choosing the design for this case study, I followed the categorization matrix for case study designs, suggested by Yin (2003, p.40). This research is designed as a single case with two embedded units of analysis. This design is chosen according to the rationale that one particular group on Facebook represent a contextual frame for this research. The discussions, chosen for the analysis, has been approached as embedded units of the case.

The main challenge with an explorative case study with open design is that the research can be too wide and superficial, lacking concretization and depth. Being constantly aware of this challenge, I tried to avoid this pitfall through the continuous reflection about the focus and the research purpose in connection to the different stages of designing and conducting of the study.

3.2.2 Description of the Group

The context for the phenomenon I wanted to study was a closed group on Facebook, used by non-Norwegian female members currently living in Norway. The group has been established by a private person in 2013 with the purpose to provide its members with an opportunity to communicate with each other and exchange experiences and information about diverse topics. The group is targeted at female non-Norwegian members who can speak the same language and are living in or have strong connections to Norway. The language is not mentioned here due to the reasons of anonymization. The members differentiate in terms of ethnicity, age, social status, occupation, religious views, number of years they have lived in Norway and their country of origin.

During the time when the research was conducted, the number of members was between 3500 and 4000. The group is closed, which means that if a new member wants to join the group, she needs to get an approval of the administrator of the group. Otherwise, one does not have access to the discussions or other information available in the group. According to the person who started the group, the main reason for making the group closed was the fact that some members discussed intimate topics and shared pictures of their children in the group.

Admission is generally based on the explicit criteria for membership, like gender (only female Facebook users can become members), place of living (a person should live in Norway) and language skills (ability to read and write in the language which is used in the group). Some exceptions may find place, in respect to the place of living and the level of language skills.

The group has some kind of formal regulation and structure. Besides the clear admission criteria described above, there are some explicit, written rules of conduct, compulsory for every member of the group. These rules restrict or prohibit unwanted behavior among its members, thus framing the discussions that may emerge in the group. As an example, it is not allowed to raise discussions on political topics, as the group is positioned as “out of politics”. It is also forbidden to express negative attitudes toward race, nationality and religion of other members. Other restrictions refer to the aspects of privacy, like the prohibition to take screenshots (screen pictures) of the discussions and share them outside of the group.

The group is “governed” by three persons who have status of administrators. This status gives them both technical opportunities and legitimacy to interfere with the discussions and “punish” those who violates the rules and norms of conduct accepted in the group. The number of posts emerging in the group and the sizes of the discussions makes it difficult for the administrators to follow with the situation at any time, so collaboration and compliance between the members and the administrators plays an important role in keeping order in the group. In contrast to some other groups, the administrators here do not direct the discussions in terms of reminding the participants to focus on the initial topic in their comments. The appearance of “off-topic” comments is not restricted, giving the participants freedom to set new agendas, develop subtopics and transform the discussion in relatively unpredictable way.

3.2.3 The structure of the discussions

To start a discussion, a member needs to fill the text field with her text and then post it on the group’s wall. In the settings of social networking this initial notice is labeled as a “*post*”. The post may contain only textual information, but there are also options for authors to add a web link, a video(s) or a picture(s) to the post. Other members start to comment the post by clicking “comment” button and writing their answers, both in form of text, but also by sharing an image, a video or a link to an external source of information. By doing that, they create “*the main branch of discussion*”, as I have labeled it in this study. It is also possible to reply to any particular comment, constructing a new, “*secondary branch of discussion*”. Doing so, one can express her agreements or disagreement with the comment, add details or ask

questions. These secondary “branches” can take any other directions and cover topics which may be completely different from the original topic of the post. When replying to the comments of others, it is possible to mention the nickname of the concrete person one appeals to. The person will then receive a notification about that and will be able to reply, even if she is not following with the discussion continually. Thus, that can lead to online conversations and debates between some limited number of the participants, which happen in the “public” space of the group and therefore available for interference by other participants. In addition, it is also possible to express one’s reaction about a post or a comment without directly replying to it, by using “like” button. In its latest version, Facebook gives opportunity to choose among six different “emotional” reactions: like, love, laugh, amaze, sadness and anger. These expressions of reaction provide additional “non-verbal” information about the meaning construction process in online discussions but may also present difficulties for interpretation of these reactions, both for participants and for the researcher. For example, “like”-reaction may be interpreted as an expression of agreement, approval and support, but may also reflect that the person generally liked the way the opinion was formulated. The number of “likes” is stated under each comment and is easily noticeable when reading through the discussion and it is possible for any of the group members to track the names of those who reacted to the comments.

Both the initial text of the post and the comments can be easily edited or deleted by their authors at any time. The administrators and the author of the post can delete the whole post with all the underlying comments or “close” the discussion for further commenting, while existing comments will be still available for reading.

The members have also the possibility to start a discussion as anonyms, by contacting the administrators. This option is used for discussing of very private problems and questions, and also in cases when it is important for the authors to remain anonymous.

Active exchange of comments happens usually during the first two days after the discussion has been started. It is relatively uncommon that the members contribute actively to a particular discussion during a period which is longer than a week. Though it is possible to add comments to any discussion later, it has not been widely practiced by the participants. After 1-3 days of active exchange of opinions, the discussion fades, while new discussions appear in the group and the members switch their attention to those.

3.3 Data Collection

The main objective with the data collection for this study has been to acquire qualitative information about how the meaning about different risks were constructed by the participants during online discussions on Facebook. The main source of data were the discussions which had emerged in the group. Additional data was gathered via field observations and interviews with the members of the group.

3.3.1 *Sampling of Discussions*

Since the number of discussions in the group was quite large, and not all the discussions had risks as their topic(s), some form for bounding of data collection was needed. It was important to establish some initial criteria, or “*sampling parameters*” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.30) to guide the process of selecting the discussions which could serve as a source of rich, “thick” descriptions of how meaning about different risks is constructed and shared in the group. This was crucial for managing of the amount of information and keeping focus on the data which are relevant for the study.

One of the main parameters was naturally chosen due to the topic of this research: the discussions, included in the study, had to cover a risk-related topic. This parameter sounds quite easy to apply, but preliminary observation of the study field has shown that it was not that concrete and needed more specification. The main challenge with that lies in the risk concept itself, which is embedded in several different perspectives and approaches (Renn, 2008, p.15) and lacks a single, wide-accepted definition, even among risk experts and scientists (Aven & Renn, 2010, p.2; Lupton, 2013, p. 20). One of the main conceptual and methodological challenges was the question about what can be understood as a risk in the context of this study?

The initial idea was to watch through the topics where the word «risk» had been used by the participants. The search of such discussions, just dated with the year 2017, revealed 95 of them, where the word “risk” was mentioned at least ones by any of the participants of these discussions. But after the brief screening of them it was obvious that not all of those were about risk. In some cases, the word “risk” was used accidentally and in a more general way, like “everything is a risk”, or as a part of idiom “at one's own risk”, while the topics for the discussions were not risk-related. In addition, it is questionable if people always use the word “risk” while talking about risks. Since many lay people conceptualize risks as something

dangerous or frightening (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003; Lupton 2013, p.10), the words “danger” and “threat” were also used for the search of relevant discussions.

Since I had been participating in this group and followed with the discussions before the project was started, I was aware of some particular discussions which could be relevant for the analysis. Some of these discussions inspired me to initiate this study.

To reveal relevant discussion topics, I summarized my previous observations by listing up the themes of the discussions which I could remember. This list was then supplemented with more recent observations and the results of the search, discussed above. The topics in the list were then grouped in more general categories. The main risk-related topics discussed in the group were then identified:

- Food products’ safety
- Risks, related to raising children (topics related to being pregnant and giving birth in Norway, Norwegian Child Welfare Service (Barnevern), bullying at schools, dividing children among parents in a case of divorce)
- Risk related to unemployment and difficulties with self-realization
- Health risks, patient safety, and risks due to vaccination
- Risks related to migration (risks of moving to another country/region or returning to the country of origin, risks of losing the resident’s permit)
- Financial and economic risks (risks connecting to buying or selling property, issues connected to banks, insurance, funding, savings, taxation system etc.).
- Risks related to personal safety (risks of being a crime victim or accident victim, but also risks of experiencing physical and psychological violence in close relationship)
- Relational and intimate risks

Since this list is quite comprehensive and it is impossible to analyze all the discussions which cover every of these topics in a single research project, which is limited by both time and resources, it was obvious that some other parameters were necessary. Time interval, size and number of the discussions were used as such additional parameters. It was deliberately chosen to consider most recent discussions and those not older than 6 months. The main argument for choosing newer discussions was the opportunity it gave to contact participants for additional

information, while their memories were still “fresh”. At the same time, there was a risk that relevant discussions would not emerge during the period of doing this research, and that was the reason to establish 6-months frame for choosing discussions from the retrospective search.

Size and number of the discussions was also considered as important criteria. Detailed qualitative analysis of a text is highly time- and resource-consuming, and the scope of this research project presented objective restrictions on how many discussions it was possible to analyze. It was chosen to analyze few large-sized discussions because of their qualitative properties which were assumed as especially valuable for this type of research. They presented a larger variety of meanings, expressed by the participants and provided with opportunities for online disputes, where the participants could express their disagreement and confront opponents with their arguments. It was also assumed that large-sized discussions with many participants have had some relation to the density of public attention toward the discussed topics. It was expected that topics which were perceived as perturbing and frightening for the majority of the group members, attracted more participants who chose to engage in the discussion.

Initially, 6 discussions were chosen as possible candidates for the analysis. The discussions had different topics and all of them had more than 30 participants. All the discussions were started in the group during the last 6 months, 4 of those were relatively new discussions which had emerged not later than a month before they were chosen for the analysis. When the work with the analysis of the first discussion was started, it became apparent that it was necessary to reduce the number of the discussions which could be analyzed as a part of this research project. The quality of the analysis was emphasized more than the quantity of the analyzed discussions. The number of the discussions was therefore reduced to two discussions. These two discussions were chosen randomly of the 6 candidates.

3.3.2 Observation

Participant observation (Walsh, 1998, p.217; Kawulich, 2005; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002, p.7) was used as the main approach for collecting contextual data about the group and the discussions. My reflections upon the chosen observer position when approaching the field of study are presented in separate section (see 3.3.4). The rationale for sampling of contextual data lies in the assumption that the context of the particular group on Facebook is important for the analysis of the discussions. The observations were mostly focused on the general interaction patterns in the group, as well as the rules and unwritten norms that structure these

interactions. Observations in regard to the basic technological aspects of social networking in the context of the studied Facebook group, which make these interactions technically possible, were also assumed as important contextual material for understanding of how the discussions emerge and develop in the group. Less attention was paid to the individual characteristics of each of the participants, besides these which were named explicitly in the discussions. This may be viewed as one of the weaknesses of this study, since it failed to connect individuals' meaning expressions to the deeper, underlying level of their individualized biographies, which tends to be the main subject of phenomenology - inspired studies (Seale, 1998, p.31). The main argument for this decision is that the study was aimed to explore *how* the risk, as an element of social life, was constructed in these discussions, not to search for explanation of *why* it is done in that particular way.

It is important to make explicit the fact that the analysis of the discussions was to the large degree grounded on the knowledge obtained from the observation of the group during a longer period of time. Therefore, it can be deceptive to consider observational data as complementary in this case, as they lie in the core of the analysis and provide an important background for the interpretations of the textual material.

3.3.3 Interview

In the initial design of the research, qualitative interview was assumed as one of the central tools for data collection, alongside with the analysis of the discussions. This assumption has been challenged in the process of working with the project.

Since the participants reside in different parts of Norway, it was decided to perform interviewing in form of online conversation via Messenger program (the program is available for all Facebook users). This type of interviewing has several advantages which were assumed as important. Not only the possibility to reach the sufficient number of geographically dispersed participants was significant. A telephone interviewing was also a possible option that overcomes the problem of geographical distance. Nevertheless, online textual interviewing was assessed as more advantageous because of its particular features, described for example by Salmons (2009, pp.8-10) or by Gruber et.al., (2012). The equality of statuses and convenience for both the interviewee and the researcher were significant reasons, but the most prominent was the possibility to postpone the reply, if the participant had difficulties with answering questions about unfamiliar topics. Online interviewing is also convenient in the terms avoiding time-consuming transcribing of interview records. Despite of the

numerous advantages, I was also aware of the challenges of online-interviewing. Not everyone likes to write, and many of the respondents answered with short phrases or sentences. It was also difficult to motivate some of them to continue the interview after a break, for example when a participant asked for additional time to think about the question. Inability to see the reaction of the participant, the time required to write an answer and difficulties with determining when to terminate the interview are some of the shortcomings which I experienced during the interviews.

The first 7 interviews were conducted without direct connection to the discussions. Those can be characterized as “pilot” semi-structured/open interviews. Both those and the subsequent interviews were conducted in a rather informal form of conversation. They were started with a common invitation to the conversation about the use of social media. It was also assumed to narrow the conversations gradually to the theme of risks. I used initially developed list of themes to guide the process, but the structure of the interviews was rather flexible, depending on the answers of the participants.

In these pilot interviews I aimed to obtain information about how the participants understood various risks and if they considered social media as a source of risk information. While conducting those interviews, I realized that the information which I collected were hardly relevant for the project. In addition, it was difficult for some of the participants to talk about risks and the theme was unfamiliar to them. At the same time, they tended to connect the theme of social media to other, not directly related to risk, themes like amusement, friendship, curiosity, etc. In fact, the answers of some of the participants about their attitudes toward the use of social media and the particular Facebook group contradicted with their observed behavior.

Those findings from the pilot interviews were important for making the decision about further direction of the research. I was convinced in my intention to study the discussions that emerge in the group. Therefore, it was decided to use the interviews as a source of contextual information and as a validation tool, while the main focus was concentrated on the analysis of the discussions.

3.3.4 Relationship between the Researcher and the Field of Study.

At the starting point of this project I faced a challenge of choosing how to approach the study field. Guided by the widely accepted ideal of researcher’s objectivity and neutral position, I wanted to avoid involvement, which could lead to “contamination” of the empirical data by

traces of my own activity in the group. While the work with the project was proceeding, I realized that this was not the main concern, because as Aase and Fossåskaret (2014, pp. 113-115) argued, objectivity of a researcher's position and "purity" of the empirical data is mere an illusion. I noticed that both the observations and preliminary analysis of the data were affected by my previous experiences of participation in the discussions in this group.

I had made acquaintance with the group and its members long time before I decided to engage in this research. As a group member, I participated in its discussions, and other members were accustomed to my role as a discussion participant. Thus, I had already gained access to the study field prior to the start of data collection and had advantageous status of "insider" (Guest et.al, p.79). However, when planning the research and communicating with the group administrator about the project, I realized that there was a risk of being denied the access to observe and use the discussions for the research purposes. Risk as a part of everyday life is usually connected to subjective experiences and intimate spheres of life (Tulloch &Lupton, 2003), that are shared by the participants with other members of this closed group on Facebook, but probably are not prepared to share with a broader audience. Therefore, I needed to negotiate my new status as a researcher in the group (Fortier, 1998, p.49) and my aims to conduct a research project on the base of the group.

While informing the members about my study project and its purposes, I was aware of possible side effects of such information: that the members could become more suspicious and careful with their comments. These concerns led to my decision to participate in some of the ongoing discussions which I assumed as relevant for analysis, as well as in the discussions not related to the main topic of my research. By doing so I tried to maintain trustworthy relationship with the participants. When conducting the research, I was particularly attentive to the possible changes in the dynamic of the discussions and variations in the topics which were discussed. Significant changes in participants' behavior and, particularly, their reluctance to raise intimate or controversial themes for discussion were not registered. In fact, the frequency of newer discussions emerging in the group has been relatively high, and some of the participants had difficulties with recollecting what was written by them in the discussions when I asked them about permission to use their quotations in this paper. Therefore, my participation in the discussions, in my opinion, had larger impact on my interpretation of the empirical data and on my work with the analysis of the texts, rather than possessing significant influence on the research field.

Thus, my general approach to the field of study can be classified as close to ethnographic (Angrosino, 2007, p.15), since I consciously chose to use myself as the “primary research instrument” (Seale, 1998, p.217). Therefore, I had to balance between the roles of “participant as observer” and “observer as participant” (Walsh, 1998., p.222) when approaching the field of study. When participating in the discussions, I positioned myself as a participant, taking part in the discussions because of my personal motives. While doing so, I attempted to reflect explicitly over those motives and the impact it may have on the development of the discussion. When contacting participants for asking about the consent to use their comments as direct citations in the paper or to answer some questions, I presented myself as a researcher. Anyhow, this distinction in roles was difficult to maintain during the work with analysis of the discussions. I attempted to see the material and interpret it both from participant and researcher perspective, but it was uneasy to notice the difference between those two perspectives. As Wadel (2014, p.76) states, constant switch between the roles, while conducting a research in one’s own culture, may be challenging for a researcher due to the “blindness” in relation to one’s own repertoire of roles and communication patterns, which may be influential for data production.

My own ethnical and cultural background was highly influential for the whole research process, starting from the choice of research topic and research questions, and ending with the way the data was interpreted in the analysis. As a person with similar ethnic background, I had more insight in the contextual details, which influenced the process of meaning construction during the online discussions. My language skills were important not only for gaining access to the data, but also for working with the analysis of the texts. Even though it is possible to translate the discussions, those translations will always modify the meaning of original quotations due to the differences in the languages, and this challenge is also highlighted by Aase and Fossåskaret (2014, p.135). My own status as a female, an immigrant and a mother were crucial point of reference in my interpretations of the material. The risks, discussed by the participants, are not distant for me as a private person: it was easy for me to identify myself with the participants of the discussions. A researcher with different background and social status would probably approach the discussions in entirely different way and achieve dissimilar results. Nevertheless, I suggest that my social status and cultural competence were advantageous for this type of inquiry namely for the opportunity to get interpretations which are close to the field.

3.4 Data Analysis

Multiple approaches were applied to data analysis in this project, with the discourse analysis as the main method for analyzing the discussions' texts. The discussions' texts were considered as examples of discourses and the analysis was aimed to explore "how particular attitudes are shaped, reproduced and legitimized through the use of the language" (Tonkiss, 1998, p.253). A discourse in this paper was understood as a system of knowledge or *a construction of meaning* in combination with its underlying practices (Seale, 1998, p.34). The discussions are assumed as both the representations of the existing discourses (meaning constructions), and at the same time they demonstrate an active process of re-constructing of the meaning in a specific context of social media, demonstrating how these discourses are practiced in specific social settings.

The analysis was mainly focused of the interpretation of the textual material with the aim to understand how different risk images are socially constructed in the particular contextual frames. The main attention was concentrated on looking for both similarities and variations in the texts. Each discussion was analyzed separately. Initial work with analysis started with general reduction and coding of data. Both descriptive and interpretative coding (Miles & Haberman, 1994, p.56-57) were applied during this process. Linguistic properties of the texts were not examined in detail, but a basic rhetorical analysis was performed. The analysis was based on the underlying assumption that language does not present a transparent reflection of the reality, but contributes to the construction of social reality (Tonkiss, 1998, p.246)

The work with the discourse analysis was concentrated on the *interpretative context* and the *rhetorical organization* of the texts, as it is recommended by Tonkiss (1998, p.249). My interpretation of the meaning was closely connected to the social context of the discussions, both in micro-level (interactions among discussion participants) and macro-level (ethnicity- and gender-related factors). Attention was also paid to the rhetorical instruments used by the participants in their replies, to make them more persuasive. The purpose of doing so was to explore how rhetorical characteristics of the online discourses possibly contribute to the social construction of meaning about various risks.

The analysis was inspired by hermeneutics' tactic of text interpretation (Alvesson & Sjöldberg, 2008, p. 193). The concept of different levels of hermeneutic circle was used to structure the process of extracting meaning from the text (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The technics of deconstruction and reconstruction of the text were also applied. While

working with the analysis, I attempted to examine the meaning of each single piece of data separately, and as a part of the whole discussion, in relation to other pieces of the text. Due to the size of the discussions and to the general exploratory character of the study, the degree of detailing had to be continuously adjusted in the process of the analysis.

To make the work with the analysis more transparent and systematic, a special table form was developed for transferring the texts of the discussions from the Facebook. The table made it possible to keep the structure of the discussion visible but compact, while providing with opportunities for writing notes alongside the texts of comments. Since the texts of the chosen discussions were sizable (up to 50 pages of text), the idea of converting the texts in the table form appeared to be very practical and made the work with the analysis easier.

My work with the analysis of the discussions was partly complemented by the information obtained from the interviews with some of the participants. Initially, it was planned to use the interviews as the basis for interpretation of the comments. Lately this intention was partially discarded due to the increasing insight in the complexity of collective meaning construction in the settings of online discussions. Individual intentions and motives of each single participant were less prominent in the canvases of the discussions unless they were explicitly stated in the comments. Since the texts of the discussions were approached as constructions of collective meaning, that strengthened my desire to put aside phenomenological approach with its idea of intentionality, as it is described in Smith et al (2009, p.13). Instead of focusing on the perspective of each single participant, I was primarily interested in the “raw” meaning appearing from the comments and the variations in possible interpretations of the same comment. Thus, data from the interviews were mainly used as a validation tool, not as the starting point of the analysis. Nevertheless, the analysis of the discussion about vaccination was started after the interview with its author. Being aware of underlying intentions and pre-understandings of the author, I experienced difficulties with becoming biased by this knowledge when I was working with the analysis. At some point I recognized that this understanding governed the process of the analysis, so it was important to make that perspective explicit in the presentation of the findings.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical aspects were considered during the processes of designing and conducting this research project. One of the main ethical challenges can be linked to the notions of intimacy, privacy and ownership, when using the discussions from the closed group on Facebook for

research purposes. The question of privacy and integrity is highly relevant for internet research because of the existing unclearness with distinguishing among what is public and private in the settings of social media in general (Sveningsson, 2009, pp. 82; Wilson et.al., 2012, p.215), and particularly in the case of participation in online discussions. A group consisting of over 3,000 members can basically be regarded as a public space, and publication of one's expressions in the group means implicitly that these are available to the public. The question of ownership of the expressions is unclear since it is a common practice to refer to, copy and even share others' speeches via social media. At the same time, a closed Facebook group with explicit privacy restrictions can nevertheless be regarded as a virtual community, with relatively clear boundaries. Interactions and communication in the group are largely based on the trust between the participants and shared opinion that the expressions remain within the group's boundaries.

In the very early stages of planning this research I realized that, as a researcher, I must respect the intimacy that exists in the group and members' right to privacy and integrity. Therefore, my first step was to contact the group administrator, requesting approval for using the group as a research object. After getting her positive response and clear consent, I proceeded with notifying NSD (Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS) which is the Data Protection Official for Research in Norway. In the middle of February 2018, I got the official conclusion from NSD, where they wrote that the project was not considered as a subject of mandatory notification. Simultaneously with notifying of NSD, the main strategy for approaching the field of study was worked out in accordance to ethical guidelines developed by National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH, 2014). This strategy included the initial informing of the members about the project by posting a notification about that in the group, which contained information about the project, its purposes, voluntary character of participation, consent and anonymity. The notification gave the members opportunity for discussion and expression of their opinion about the project. I was prepared to face skeptical attitude from some of the members, but the response was entirely positive, and no one had expressed objection against being observed. In fact, many of them offered themselves as potential interviewees.

In addition to this general notification, specific information texts were developed for requesting informed consent from those members, whose statements were chosen to be used in the analysis and who were invited to take part in an interview. The majority of the participants gave their written consent to the use of their statements, while few of them never

replied to the messages, and one participant asked not to include her comment in the paper. When conducting the interviews, I used preliminary prepared informative text message at the start of the conversations. In the end of the interviews, the participants were asked additionally about the permission to use the results of the interview in the project.

Another ethical challenge I experienced while realizing this research project, was related to the question of anonymization, both when describing the group and when using the citations from the discussions. The description needed to be detailed enough to emphasize the important contextual aspects of the case. At the same time, the group had to be described in such a way that it would be difficult to identify it. Thus, it was challenging to choose which details to exclude from the description. Since there are not that many similar groups on Facebook targeting this cluster of immigrants, my concerns were mostly related to the risk that the group may be identified.

To protect participants' privacy while working with the analysis of the discussions, several measures were taken. The texts of the discussions were copied and transferred manually to Word documents and organized in specially prepared tables. The participants were coded with a random number from 1 to 100. The same participants who took part in several discussions, got different numbers for different discussions. The participants who took part in the interviews were anonymized with the use of numeric code, not connected to these used in the discussions. The lists with participants' usernames and codes for each of the discussions and for the interviews were kept in paper form and were eliminated after the work with the project was finished. Since the direct quotations, presented in the paper, are translated to English, it will be uneasy for the third parties to use those to trace the identity of the authors. The translation changed the outlook of the citations due to the discrepancies between the languages. In addition, all personal information mentioned in the citation, was anonymized.

Possible effects for the privacy of third parties were also considered when utilizing sensitive information for the research purposes. Special concerns were related to the use of citations where the participants shared information about their children. Additional anonymization measures were applied, by changing or not mentioning the children's gender and age.

During the analysis of the discussions, it was crucial to examine critically the statements of the participants. It was important to do it in a respectful way and stress on the neutral, non-judging attitude toward the opinion expressed in those statements.

3.6 Credibility and Transparency of the research

While conducting this research, I was aware of the challenges of quality control of qualitative social research. This problem is highly prominent and extensively discussed in the scientific community (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 124; Seale, 1999, p.465; Reason, 2006, p.188). Modern methodological literature presents a large variety of criteria for quality assessment and control, while there are no clear guidelines for which criteria are most preferable. Some of the authors use actively the term “rigor” to address the quality aspect (for example, in Kitto, Chesters and Grbich, 2008; Jackson II, Drummond & Camara, 2007), while other suggest applying “trustworthiness” for that purpose (Lincoln & Guba, 1981, in Morse et al., 2002; p.15).

This research project was planned and conducted with the use of constructivist perspective on risk and assumption about interpretative, pluralistic and contextual character of scientific knowledge about social reality (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.125). Therefore, it is rather illogical to apply criteria of external validity and objectivity to this project to assess its quality. I have chosen to stress on the credibility and transparency assuming them as the most important safeguards of trustworthiness of this inquiry.

Credibility is assumed to replace validity in qualitative research, and “refers to whether the findings are well presented and meaningful” (Kitto et al., 2008, p.243). Assessment of credibility of discourse analysis may be challenging since any textual material is open for alternative interpretation and the meaning, examined with the help of discourse analysis is not “objective” or “real”, but subjective and contestable (Tonkiss, 1998, p.259). To reassure the credibility of the inquiry, I applied three main strategies: *researcher reflexivity*, *prolonged engagement in the field* and *use of thick, rich descriptions* (Creswell & Miller, 2000 pp. 127-129). Since discourse analysis is always based on subjective interpretation of the textual material, it was important for me to be explicit about the assumptions, beliefs and other factors which could have influenced the research process. My interpretations of the discussions were guided by the general focus on risk as a social construction in this project. This focus predetermined my choice of discussions and my approach to data analysis. Furthermore, my assumption about social media as a natural part of modern social practice has been made explicit in the paper, as well as my ontological position on the quality of meaning produced with the help of online interaction and communication in comparison to traditional face-to-face interaction. My prolonged engagement in the group reinforces the project’s credibility since that led to accumulation of rich contextual data about the patterns of

interactions in this particular Facebook group, which strengthens the trustworthiness of my interpretation of the empirical material. The texts of the discussions, which were chosen for the analysis, represent thick, rich and detailed descriptions of participants' understandings, opinions and experiences, and this aspect enhance the credibility and authenticity of the project. I have chosen not to apply member checking for this research due to my agreement with the arguments of Morse et. al (2002, p.16), who claim that in some types of research, especially studies of meaning construction, member checking may reduce credibility of the inquiry. In this research I was not focused on how well my interpretations of the discussions conform with the initial, subjective intention and understanding of each single participant. I searched for more abstract, constructivist understanding of the collective meaning construction and treated discussions as discourses which are open for alternative interpretations, not constrained by the initial intention of their authors. Therefore, member checking was assumed not just irrelevant, but also potentially damaging for the project's credibility. Nevertheless, I used interviews to reassure that my understanding of the meaning expressed in discussions is not completely dissimilar to the understandings of the participants.

Transparency, also defined as procedural or methodological rigor (Kitto, Chesters and Grbich, 2008, p.244), is closely connected to researcher's reflexivity on the choices and decisions which are taken during the whole research process (Reason, 2006, p.190). When working on the methodology chapter of this paper, I devoted extensive effort to the detailed description of the research process, argumentation for the decisions taken during this process, as well as my theoretical and epistemological assumptions. This was done in order to make the whole research process transparent and explicit not only in technical terms of research design, data sampling and analysis. Detailed description of the context for the case study and reflections on my position as a researcher were included in this paper to show explicitly the underlying basis for my interpretations of the data. The use of quotations in the presentation of my empirical findings strengthens the transparency of the study by applying the practice of open data and material (Miguel et.al, 2014, p. 31).

4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This chapter consists of two main sections, where the main findings of the analysis of two discussions are presented: *discussion about Norwegian barnevern* and *discussion about child immunization*. The results for each discussion are presented separately. The risk constructions, revealed in the process of the analysis, will be demonstrated graphically in the end of each section.

4.1 Discussion about Norwegian Child Welfare Service

4.1.1 Introduction

This discussion emerged in connection with the case about Norwegian Child Welfare Service (in Norwegian “Barnevern”, the Norwegian term will be used further in the analysis) and their treatment of Norwegian-Canadian family. The discussion can be characterized as large-sized, as it consisted of 63 replies in the main branch and 278 replies in the secondary branches, thus over 300 comments in total. 58 participants took part in the discussion, while several group members didn’t participate directly, but expressed their reactions to the comments with the help of “like” buttons.

Several discussions related to participants’ concerns about barnevernet have emerged in the group. These discussions had different focuses, from discussing the situation with barnevern in general to examining a particular situation, often in connection to someone’s personal experience with this agency. Different attitudes toward the work of the agency were expressed in these discussions, but the notion of *otherness* can be traced in every discussion about the topic. The underlying idea of the contrast between “us” and “them” emerging in the discussions can be therefore understood as the central aspect of meaning construction about the risk of barnevern. The agency is seen as an example of “them”, who can both be dangerous or helpful. The participants are arguing if “they” are good or bad, if “they” possess a risk on “us” or not. Split in opinions about that makes discussions on this topic highly emotional and prone to conflicts among the participants. There are some group members who work in the organization and their position is dual as they are both the representatives of “us” and “them”.

In spite of different attitudes toward the agency, the relationship between barnevern and families is generally imagined as risky and unwanted in the group. This view is also supported by some of the interviewees in this study, who either directly labeled barnevern as one of their main risks, or mentioned that, despite their generally neutral attitude toward the agency, they don’t want to deal with it personally.

This discussion started with the publication of the video which was filmed by a middle-aged Canadian woman, currently residing in Norway with her Norwegian husband and their son, who is about 10-12 years old. The video was broadly shared on social media on the day the discussion started, but it is unclear to the viewers when the filmed situation took place: recently or several weeks prior to publication. A member, who shared the video in the group, started the discussion asking other members for explanation for “why” and “what for”. The

video documented the situation when barnevern with the police came to the family's apartment with the aim to take away the boy from the family. The mother is commenting the situation in English while filming it. The video showed, among other things, the moment when the policemen used physical force against the boy who refused to follow with them and tried to run away. The policemen lay the boy down on the ground (which is covered with snow and ice) and hold him, while he is screaming. The mother is emotional when commenting this moment: she is crying to the police that the boy is not a criminal and that a Canadian citizen cannot be treated in that way. In her comments, the mother is also appealing to the women's rights and solidarity, while all the officials who are shown in the video are males. During the discussion the participants referred to the additional information shared by the father on his Facebook page. Among other details, it was claimed that the boy was taken from the family because the parents decided to try homeschooling.

There was generally limited focus on the positive role of the agency in the society in that concrete discussion. Following themes that refer to positive or neutral image of barnevern were identified:

- *Better to let them act wrong than not to act at all*
- *Children are not the property of their parents*
- *We cannot trust the information coming from parents, they are hiding something, while barnevern are more objective*
- *The negative information about barnevern is overestimated and doesn't reflect the reality*
- *Barnevern helped my family*
- *It was not barnevern, but police who acted violently against the boy. Police has legitimate right to use power against citizens regardless age and other circumstances.*
- *Even worse things happen in other countries*

The risk that a child will not get help from barnevern was not addressed widely in this discussion, but some of the participants noticed that it is "*better to act wrongly than not to act*", "*they will be blamed if they don't do anything*" and that the public tends to notice only negative accounts about the work of barnevern.

Therefore, risk in this discussion is chiefly seen in relation to the families being broken by the agency, and the children separated from their parents without significant reason. Perceptions of the risk are expressed in the connection to the:

- visible consequences (shown in the video),

- fear and other emotional reactions being evoked by these consequences
- uncertainty about the actions of barnevern, parents and other institutions, and
- uncertainty about the information which is available about this case.

Uncertainty can be connected also to perceptions of one's own chances of becoming "their client" and to the absence of official information, lack of personal experience with the agency and the duality of negative/positive attitudes, like "barnevern is good for protecting children's rights in general, but I don't want them to come to me". In the discussion, the participants were expressing their concerns, arguing for their points of view and by doing so were creating a collective meaning about the risk of barnevern. Thus, the risk can be understood as a social construction, and some of the elements of this construction revealed in the process of analyzing the text of the discussion.

4.1.2 Barnevern as an expert system.

During analysis of the discussion it became clear that barnevern represents an example of *expert system*, using Giddens's terminology (Kaspersen, 1995, p.124). Of course, the participants never used this term, but during the course of this and previous discussions it became apparent that barnevern is understood as a system which performs some specific functions in the society. It is also acknowledged that this system is operated by experts, or "professionals" as the participants called them.

In contrast to Giddens's claim of "disembedding" character of expert systems in modern society (Lupton, 2013, p.97), since they facilitate the time-space separation, barnevern (and other child-focused systems like schools, kindergartens, health care services etc.), in this discussion are understood as simultaneously embedded and distant expert systems. Those expert systems are both *becoming a part of* private life of people and families and *getting more access* to the very intimate spheres of individuals' lives, becoming closer to people in this term. Surprisingly, but the participants of the discussion generally do not express any negative attitudes toward that, but rather accept it as a part of their reality. Some of them even expressed positive attitudes, as one participant did when referring to her experience with BUP (Mental health protection services for children and adolescents):

"(...) And I do not care how or who looks at me [judges me]. It was important for me that the specialists captured the picture of our family, understood [found out] who I am, who my husband is, what kind of childhood we had, what parents we had, who they ... all that has its impact on the child (...). They also talked one-on-one with my [child] and asked many

questions. We had nothing to hide, my [child] answered as it was. I would gladly go there once again. Because they showed us our [child] from the other side, from the side which we did not see [the child]. But at the same time, problems were revealed that needed to be addressed.”

4.1.3 Barnevern as a power system

The main feature of barnevern as an expert system, outlined during the course of the discussion, which gives it opportunity to operate in the way it does is *power*. The notion of power in relation to barnevern is crossing the whole discussion as a red line, from the first to the last comment. In this context, this expert system is perceived as *power system*. Power is not approached as a univocal concept, but rather as a construction consisting of several different aspects.

In the context of the discussion power can be understood as a *power of definition*. First of all, barnevern has a power to define the rules of conduct. As an expert system, barnevern is operating according to some norms/rules of “how one should raise children”. These norms are based on the expert knowledge about upbringing children, knowledge which is produced by experts one never meets in her life. But, these experts have impact on the most intimate spheres of one’s life like bringing up the children and family relations. Like traditions, those rules are appearing implicit in this and other discussions. Nobody in the discussion referred to the specific official source, where one can read about these rules, except for one occasion when one of the participants posted a link to official site to prove that homeschooling is officially allowed in Norway. Otherwise, it is assumed that these rules are known and conventionally accepted by the participants. Unlike traditions, these “rules” are put on individuals from outside by “distant others” (Lupton, 2013, p.97), and can be perceived as quite distinct from traditional views on upbringing of children. During the course of the discussion, some of the participants depicted the process of breaking up with the traditional knowledge and values in modern society like: *family, mother-child connection* (which is traditionally viewed as salient), understandings that one’s own family is better than foster family, that parents understand better than strangers what is best for their children and so forth.

One of the participants writes, when replying to a member who doubts about the necessity of psychological examination of her child:

“Nothing to dispute about, leave this matter to specialists ... Mother certainly knows her child best, but experts are not stupid, they will sort it out”.

This sentence is an example of the participant’s reflexive position about the traditional views of mother as the closest person to the child, at the same time positively noticing the presence of the experts who are perceived to have better knowledge and thus more authority to decide what is better for the child.

Another participant expresses more critical view on these changes, highlighting possible far-reaching consequences:

“But those who had put this idea into the heads of Norwegians, cannot be called otherwise than perverts. What future of the country and what increase in the birth rates can we talk about, provided that the institution of family is purposefully destroyed in the Norwegian society, how it is possible at all to take children by force from their mother [how can they take children from their mother]. People will simply be afraid to bear children, well, in this case, it is not so far [this may lead] to the disappearance of the entire nation.”

The expert system has power to define the rules. But following these rules does not protect individuals from the risk of becoming “victims” of the system. One of the participants used expression “ending up in its milestones”, which can be interpreted both as emphasizing perceived *unhuman* character of the system’s treatment of individuals (both adults and children) and like the awareness that anyone *by chance* can “end up” as a system’s client. That leads to the second aspect of the barnevern’s “power of definition”, which refers to the power to decide what can be understood as a violation of rules in each situation. Several participants expressed critique about the decision of barnevern to take the child from the family in the video. Some of them noticed that such a decision is usually grounded on barnevern’s *assessment* of the situation in the family as dangerous for child. Several participants noticed and expressed their concerns about the expansion of the borders of the concept “dysfunctional family” - not just drug addicts, alcoholics and violent people are viewed as dangerous. Families who do not manage to cooperate with expert systems according to the expectations of the later, can also be labeled as dysfunctional and in demand of involvement of barnevernet. Some of the participants perceive it as unreasonable exaggeration, like in this comment:

“(…)Taking away when there is a suspicion of something serious, when the life and health of the child is in danger, this is one thing, but taking away, while exposing [the child] to trauma,

because barnevern didn't like the climate in the family, or the family does not cooperate well with the institutes, or the child is not social, in such a case the [barnevern] can work with the family, hinting at the consequences, and taking measures, but everything is usually the other way around. But this is my opinion (...)"

The phrase "barnevern didn't like the climate in the family" is appealing to the notions of subjectivity of the system's assessment, since the verb "to like" bears a meaning of highly subjective, intuitive attitude to someone or something. Usually it cannot be accepted as an argument for decision making in official settings, otherwise one has power to use any argument in the way he or she wants.

One of the participants noticed that there are no predefined criteria for decision making about taking children from families, it is up to the experts - barnevern workers - to define the situation. Another participant conforms with this view by linking power of the system to the families' dependence on assessments of the concrete person – the executive officer (in Norwegian, "saksbehandler") who deals with the case. As a human, he or she is prone to make mistakes, as his/her assessments can be biased by subjective perceptions, attitudes and motives:

"It all depends on the personality of the saksbehandler. If it is a sick in the head, power-hungry person, then he will act according to his ideas. I was in Bv by myself, was called to the meeting with them because of [they got written concern] bekymringsmelding, they closed the case on the same day, before they even opened it. Because I met adequate people. But I know examples from which your hair can turn gray. So, it's not about BV [barnevernet], but about every single employee. "

Notably, even her own positive experience does not provide a sufficient ground to form a positive perception of barnevern. She does not connect the positive outcome of her meeting with the system to the "normality" of the situation in her family. Rather, she links this positive experience to the occasional character of meeting an "adequate" employee, highlighting randomness of the individual officer's assessment of every single situation.

Decision to take the child from the family on the video is also understood as a *punishment* of the parents by the system for the lack of compliance from their side, or *revenge* of the system for the criticism and discontent expressed by the family before. As one of the participants noted: "*they don't like when you criticize them*". In contrast with the previous comment, where the attention was focused of a single representative of the system in attempt to

personify it, here the person tends to generalization, using pronoun “they” to capture both remoteness and facelessness of the image of barnevern.

The importance of behaving correctly and in accordance to system’s expectations is highlighted by several of the respondents. Here is one example:

"It's better to cooperate and let them do their job in order to clarify everything and understand the situation. Madly hard, I know by myself, but this is the only correct decision. By filming, shouting, arguing, we will convince by [barneverne] even more that the child needs to be rescued from the psychotic parents. It is necessary to cooperate in order not to harm yourself and the child even more.

I'm sure that before the boy was taken [in the video], there were other meetings and it is not known how parents behaved there, aggressively or not. A lot of things may affect the outcome of the case."

When reading this comment, it is important to notice that on the video there is no evidence of the parents behaving aggressively in its conventional meaning. In connection with other comments in this discussion, aggressiveness in this context can be understood as either parents’ emotionality, or their open rejection to follow recommendations of barnevern and other expert systems (like school and BUP).

4.1.4 Power, Police and Trauma

Power is also discussed in more instrumental, direct way when participants evaluated the action of the policemen and emphasized the *trauma* the boy was inflicted by the cooperative actions of barnevern and police.

Several of the participants noticed that the child was treated as a criminal by the police on this video. One part of the participants reacted negatively to that, and most of these comments were highly emotional. Many of the participants expressed their empathy and compassion with the boy. Emotional reactions like “*I can still hear him screaming*”, “*That’s awful*”, “*I am deeply shocked*” were dominating among the short-sized comments.

Some of the participants shared the same opinion about the use of violence against innocent child as unacceptable in Norway as a democratic country. They blamed both the police and barnevern for neglecting the right to personal untouchability and freedom of the child when using some forms of physical violence. In the following fragment of the discussion it is shown

how three of the participants are contrasting this situation with other types of situations when police did not use any violence:

P1: *“And really!!!*

There was one who lived in our apartment on the ground floor, he threatened his girlfriend with a knife, beat her, tried to fight with my husband, sold drugs, well, he was taken to the police only once while we called 10 times to them!!! ONECE!!!! They talked to him, no one was wringing his arms. And in this case, there is a boy (((a child!!! They treat Breivik better than the child”

P2: *“And in our case they didn’t come when we called))) but using force against children - it’s not the same as chasing junkies... three persons are ready to act if needed ...”*

P3: *“Well, here you need to save the children ... from their parents. But a drug addict, he is not dangerous, he needs help ...”*

The first person appears as more emotional and straightforward in using the examples of her violent neighbor and the most famous Norwegian terrorist as her pathos-laded arguments against the use of violence in the video. The comments of the two other participants are colored ironically and can be interpreted as an attempt to show the absurdity of presenting violence as a way of safeguarding children from their parents.

The trauma that the child gets during the police’s assault is assessed as disproportional to the perceived problems in the family. Many of the participants are concerned about the psychological consequences for the child in this case and generalize it to other situations, when children are taken mistakenly from obviously ‘normal’ families. Several aspects of the case were stressed by the participants in connection to that:

- the initially “innocent” status of the child,
- the uncertainty around the decision of barnevern to separate the boy from his family,
- boy’s unwillingness to leave the family with the officials,
- assumptions about the child’s underlying psychological problems which contribute to (or explain) his irrational choices of running away and resisting the police,
- the child’s right to be heard by barnevern and other agencies.

Several participants emphasized the aspect of human rights as unclear in this and similar cases when the children didn't want to obey barnevern's decision and refused leave their families.

A contrasting view on the actions of the police was expressed by some of the participants. They argued that the use of physical force was a normal reaction of the police to the resistant behavior of the boy. Especially one participant highlighted the prevalence in use of violence by police against those who do not obey, while comparing situation with other countries such as the USA and Canada. She refers to broadly known incidents in the USA, where policemen used weapon against adults and adolescents. Here is a short passage of the discussion, where she both contrasts the situation with policeman – individual relationship in the US and then uses it to arrive to a more universal conclusion of how one should not resist to the police also in Norway:

P4: *“And let's imagine for a moment that it isn't happening in Norway, but in USA or in Canada, and a police patrol arrived, an armed patrol by the way, and a social worker. I think it's scary to imagine what would be in the case of resistance to the police. Just do not say that we're not there, we're here ...”*

P5: *“And let's imagine for a minute that we live not in Norway, but somewhere on a desert island where there are no police and BV, only the ocean and palm trees.”*

P4: *“but we live here, and everyone knows that one must not resist police officers, whether you are in Norway, in the US, or in Canada. Although yes, you can, but it will only get worse.”*

P6: *“Well, yes, there they will shoot you like [a piece of] meat and do not look that you are a woman and in front of the child.”*

The contrasting perspective of how the police in the USA treat citizens in an analogous situation can be interpreted as an attempt to diminish the perception of the threat. The choice of the USA for making the comparison apparently is not occasional. The USA is perceived as a model of a democratic country. Since the use of violence by the police against the citizens is widely practiced there, similar, and even milder praxis does not discredit Norway as also a democratic state. The author does not compare the situation to the similar actions of police in for example China, Nigeria or North Korea, even though the evidence of police violence in these countries is conventionally perceived as much higher. It is also notable that actions of the police are seen separately from actions of barnevern. The police are perceived to have

their own mandate in this situation, without any connection with the presence of barnevern. Some of the participants insisted on the concretization that it was police who were so brutal against the child, not barnevern.

Anyhow, some other participants saw the situation as a cooperative action of the barnevern and the police and put the responsibility for the abuse of power on both of these authorities. They claimed that there is a need for raising this problem at more general level and changing the instructions for how the professionals should deal with similar cases:

“When two adult men are pressing a 12-year-old boy to the ground (very clearly seen at the end), the question of who provoked the situation should not arise at all, this is a huge violence against the child. Professionals who think about children should not allow this under any circumstances.”

4.1.5 “Playing by the rules” - Conforming to internalized demands of the expert system

The theme of the necessity of “playing by the rules” was also apparent in the discussion alongside with the theme of power. Some of the participants claimed that an individual (a parent) should not behave differently from or against the accepted norms, if she wants to reduce the risk of barnevern’s involvement in her family’s life. The fact that barnevern and other expert systems have the power to define the rules is assumed as a part of the objective reality, and one cannot do anything with that, but must act due to these rules to keep barnevern away:

“The matter is that we have come here, they have their own rules of the game here, if you are prepared to play against the rules, then prepare yourself that they will not play according to the rules either. (...) I live here, no matter if I like the rules or not, but I have chosen to be here and I “play” by the rules ...”

Interestingly, the rules mentioned in the discussion are not directly connected to the childcare itself, but mostly to the way parents cooperate with the expert systems, like barnevern, schools, kindergartens, health care representatives and so forth. It is not enough to be a good parent, one has to demonstrate that to the expert systems. Parents should assure the surrounding expert systems that they listen to and apply the recommendations of the experts while upbringing their children. One of the respondents claimed that parents should also be able to anticipate their child’s potential problems and attempt to dissolve them:

«Well, you know, you have to use your head, and do not assume that they won't come to you because you have a maple leaf on your passport. It is necessary to think a little more broadly, what to do to prevent them coming to you... where to go first ... »

In her comments, the participant emphasized the importance of proactive actions of parents as a preventive measure to keep “them” away. She points out how crucial it is for the parent to be attentive to the “early signals” and being proactive. In her another comment she demonstrated that by referring to her own experience:

“(...) when my [child] was bullied at school she decided to respond, but to respond as she could, [for example] to fight. And then the teacher told us a couple of times that [the child] is aggressive. Although [the child] is very calm. And I realized that next time the teacher will declare to BV, so then I went to our regular doctor and he sent us to BUP. There they sorted it out quietly, peacefully and the offenders and the school were "fucked" well. This is to the fact that one needs to look at the problem deeper.”

So, it is stated as parents' responsibility to anticipate the problem and act in advance. While doing so, they should conform to the demands and expectations of the expert systems. In the example with the Canadian boy, the parents explained that the boy was bullied at school and had problems with socialization. Their decision to try homeschooling was understood by some of the participants as inappropriate way of dealing with the problems, since it was not approved by the experts. The relationship between individuals and expert systems is officially stated as *voluntary*, but in fact it appears to be perceived as *compulsory* by some of the participants of the discussion. The situation with the Canadian boy is used by some of them as an example that one cannot easily implement the idea of homeschooling, because it is perceived that children *should* attend school, even though homeschooling itself is not officially prohibited in Norway. But, as one of the participants notions, there are some unwritten norms which must be respected as well, so “*not prohibited*” is not the same as “*allowed*”. Likewise, it is not prohibited to reject the offer of psychological examination at BUP, but it is perceived as “inappropriate” or “inadvisable”. As it was highlighted, the parents are put in the position when they actually have to accept whatever they will be offered by the expert systems (schools, barnevern, BUP, etc.). Thus, they cooperate with the expert systems not only because they perceive such a cooperation as something helpful or necessary for their children. They think that they have to do so to reduce the risk of involvement of

barnevern. In the example below, the participant discussed the problem of accepting/rejecting help from BUP:

"Talking is talking, it's better this way than dealing with BV [barnevern].

My friend and her son were there [in BUP]. And yes, a year of consultations and nothing was found. Barnevern sent them there. And BUP gave the conclusion that the family is normal and no problems. I basically do not understand, it is bad if they don't send [the child] to the specialists, when they have sent it was bad too. Our mothers know better about everything. "

Again, it is stated that dealing with some expert systems (like school, BUP) is perceived as more expedient than dealing with barnevern. It is also interesting that the person mentions the notion of experts' approval of family as normal. The normality is not a subject to personal or social knowledge and opinion, but a domain of experts' evaluation and conclusion. Some other participants expressed similar thoughts about the power of expert systems to define the situation. Parents' accept of this power and conformity with experts' definitions is also seen as a part of "playing by the rules" concept.

Therefore, "playing by the rules" is stated as one of the most important aspects of living in Norway. Free and liberal as it is, the country is still perceived by this immigrant group as a homogenic social space, where the expression of dissimilar views on social practices is unwelcomed. As one of the participants noted ironically, those who dissent are "*bringing fire down on themselves*". Thus, it is highly important for immigrants to get accustomed with the written and unwritten rules, otherwise they are exposing themselves and their families to risk. Some of the participants proposed that the Canadian woman in the discussed case was not aware of the fact that she was breaking some of the rules existing in the society. Others suggested that as a Canadian, she was not accustomed to the more dependent role of an individual in Norwegian society, where one cannot simply live as she wants. Regardless of the reason, several of the participants blamed the parents of the boy for failing to "play by the rules" and thus bringing these problems upon themselves.

Nevertheless, not all the participants expressed agreement with such a state of affairs. Here is an example of the polemic between two of the participants about the acceptance of deviation from following the rules:

P1: *"It is almost like in North Korea ... a little dissent and that attracts unnecessary attention with possible consequences in the form of fascist methods. Great prospect!"*

P2: *“No one keeps you here (...)”*

P1: *“Thanks for reminding me. My family keeps me here. (...) You should get used to living in a society where not everyone is happy and not everyone shares your delights.”*

P2: *“I have no delights, but I am not reviling Norway non-stop, and since I live here, I am trying to adjust to the rules and laws of this society, and not to pee against the wind ...”*

P1: *“in a free society, people should be allowed to pee against the wind, if they want to do so and that does not harm others. If any homosexual marriages are allowed, why should the homeschooling be suspicious?”*

Two competing images of Norwegian society are presented in this dialog. The first one refers to practical knowledge about the preexisting rules which constrain behavior and highlights the need to adjust to these rules. The other one is appealing to the ideal of free and democratic society which should be more tolerant to variations in views, social practices and lifestyles.

4.1.6 Lack of information, trust and taboo.

Lack of trustworthy information appears to be one of the main challenges for many of the participants in connection to the perceived risk of barnevern. From one side, the perceived power of barnevern can also be understood as power to hold back the information. One of the participants writes the following about that:

“What has really happened there [in the family] knows only barnevern. But they will not say, secret info. And what the family themselves say or their acquaintances, it is written with a fork on water [it is not trustworthy information]. Nobody except barnevern knows what and how really happened there.”

In this comment the author highlights both the secrecy of the information from barnevern and the skepticism towards non-official sources of information.

An absence of information from barnevern officials leads to the situation when people have access only to the information from non-official sources like mass media and, recently, social media. Some of the participants expressed their concerns about the quality of that kind of information, taking the video with the Canadian boy as an example, like in the two following citations from the two different comments of the same author:

“Yes, I think there was a conflict with the school and the school was the initiator. And homeschooling, it's just that the child didn't go to school. Parents did not cooperate. And

then, there is nothing clear about what was before. Any video is possible to turn both in one and the other way, forming public opinion.”

“Nobody knows anything, one piece of video easily rules the minds and consciousness, what preceded everything and why everything is like that, who and what provoked it - we do not know.”

As the author noticed, the video “rules the minds”, because it depicts the most dramatic moment of the story. But since the contextual information of reliable quality is absent, the documentary value of the video is assessed as very low by several of the participants.

Lack of information can be related here to the notions of trust or distrust. As noticed above, some of the participants expressed distrust in private sources of information, because those were perceived as non-objective, presenting fragmented picture of the situation and often showing just one side of the problem. Not all of them expressed automatically trust in official sources of information either. In fact, perceived secrecy and reticence of barnevern, absence of information from them and perceived subjectivity of barnevern’s associates can be attributed to the expression of more trust in other information sources, like mass media, which are perceived as more neutral and free. Perceived lack of transparency of barnevern as an expert system limits possibility for social control of its activity. Some of the participants argued that public attention (mass media before, but also social media now) to the particular case can raise chances for fair and lawful processing and positive outcome, like in the following example:

“On the other hand, she has some sort of trump card in her fight with barnevern for her child. Because after watching the video, they are saying openly now that it is a violation of the process from the side of the barnevern. Otherwise, you cannot prove it to anyone. The child's mental state is so traumatized by the very fact of being removed from the family.”

The absence of information from barnevern officials and limited own experience put people in an uncertain position: they have to *believe* in the expert system and the adequacy of its actions but cannot be completely sure about that. As one of the participants states:

“(…) I've never seen how these services work and I always wanted to believe in their adequacy, but this video proves the opposite (…)”

It is notable, that several participants used the verb “to believe” when expressing their attitude to barnevern. While some of them state that they do not believe in “kind” barnevern or as one

of the participants claimed in her comment: *“I believe in parents more than in the system”*, others express more doubt and uncertainty about that, like in the following comment:

“Well, I believe partly because I saw that they do not take away kids for nothing, even when the school, police and the ex had told on them. But I also met cases where they tried to take away wrongfully and did not succeed. Not without the black sheep, but it's like everywhere. Those are the stories from my inner circle.”

Expressed notion of “partial believing” can be interpreted as an effort to sustain the trust in the system by reflecting over the critical information the person is exposed to and allocating it reflexively within the system of previous knowledge about how the world is operating. One doesn't trust in the system blindly, but at the same time cannot distrust it completely.

The discussion around the information from and trust in barnevern and other expert systems in Norwegian society revealed also perceived difficulties with talking about the problems with barnevern. It appears to be a taboo subject, which is not socially accepted in its wider context. People experience difficulties with critics toward those expert systems which have power and social/political accept. The taboo-theme can also be interpreted in connection to the immigrant background of those who complain, to the immigrant-milieu and how the particular group of immigrants identifies themselves in Norwegian society. In the course of the discussion it was often mentioned that it is not acceptable to criticize the life in Norway for those who are non-Norwegians but are living in Norway and *“enjoying the benefits”*. One is supposed to be grateful and obliged. It is perceived as especially inappropriate in the cases when the migration was voluntary, and one had chosen by herself to move to Norway (in contrast to refugees). The main argument for that was summarized by one of the participants in one short phrase: *“Nobody was asking (inviting) us [to come] here”*. It can be interpreted as a reflexivity about the incompleteness of one's immigrant status: one does not see the possibility to identify oneself as a part of the host society, but can only do it in terms of contrasting between “them” and “us”. This understanding was also expressed by another participant in her reply to her opponent's worries about the consequences of a specific policy of barnevern for Norwegian society:

“Do not worry about Norwegians, worry about the nation whose representative you are. Norwegians will sort it out by themselves.”

This phrase can be understood as a reminder about keeping the symbolic borders between “us” and “them”. It is not accepted to cross these borders even though you have been living in

this country for several years and even if you have got Norwegian citizenship. It is still “their” country, “their” rules and laws, therefore it is not something an immigrant has right to criticize. *To criticize* means not only to express one’s dissatisfaction with some critical conditions in the society, but also to indicate the underlying need for change of those conditions. But, as an immigrant, one cannot claim for changes in the host society, even though she meets with the risks existing in this new society. This insight can provide a new perspective for explaining of how various risks, not only those in connection with barnevern, are understood and managed by immigrants.

4.1.7 *Fear and emotionality*

The theme of fear and emotional reactions as the psychological aspects of understanding the risk of barnevern were apparent in the discussion. It is interesting that some of the participants who express generally positive attitude and trust to barnevern as an expert system, still mention that they make efforts for not becoming their “clients”. This ambivalent “trust-distrust” position may be connected to the uncertainty about possible outcome due to the perceptions of power of barnevern to use subjective assessments of their employees as objective facts. One of the participants argued that the barnevern don’t come without reason, but at the same time she mentioned that “they do make mistakes sometimes”. The fear may be grounded on the lack of understanding of how to cope with this risk. Even when the families are doing “the right things” they are still afraid of being misunderstood by the surrounding expert systems. The fear may also be connected to the perceived lack of personal control over the situation when barnevern is involved in someone’s family.

Several of the participants expressed negative reactions about the situation on the video, both by using emotionally-charged expressions and by describing their feelings in connection to the situation. They wrote about being scared, frightened, sad, stressed, angry and outraged. Some of them used emoji¹ to show their emotional condition. Large amount of the comments contained the expressions of empathy with the boy, the mother or the whole family. The actions of barnevern in relation to the family and the boy were depicted with the use of expressions with the effect of exaggeration. Those actions were labeled as “attacks”, “lawlessness”, “threats” and “harassment”.

¹ Ideograms and smileys used in electronic messages and web pages. Emoji exist in various genres, including facial expressions, common objects, places and types of weather, and animals (Wikipedia, 2018).

Some of the participants described their emotions, while comparing the situation with the Canadian boy with the particular qualities of their own family and children, as in the following citation:

“Now I'm stressed! My son of 10-year-old is also not very social. He likes to draw, to make things, to make mini figures of polymer. He is not loner, but he likes loneliness and family. So that I cannot sleep now? (((“

In this example it is apparent how the situation with the Canadian boy amplified the feeling of fear and uncertainty for that singular participant.

The theme of emotionality in connection with the risk of barnevern were also depicted, when the participants discussed how the mother behaved herself on the video while the police and barnevern were taking the boy. Interesting contradictions in the comments and opinions about that were revealed. Some participants were blaming the mother that she appeared as very emotional and screamed to the police. As they suggested, such a behavior shows that she is not emotionally stable, something that could be used against her. They highlighted the importance of being calm and cooperative when barnevern is taking the kids. Calm behavior is attributed here to a high degree of self-control, so it is perceived as beneficial in such circumstances. The following comment demonstrates such a view:

“The mom and her behavior in the situation look not quite normal, it will be used against her in the case. She had to think about the child, and not yelling from the balcony about her women's rights and calling feminists. She frightened him with her cry, she did not cooperate with bv[barnevern]. She looks very unstable mentally, unfortunately. It is clear that they will take him anyway - do it with a minimal trauma for your child and show that you are standing for the interests of the child and will cooperate.”

At the same time, several participants reacted negatively to the parents “passive” behavior under the situation: the mother was filming what was happening with her mobile phone, the father was on the phone with relatives and appeared very calm. These participants would prefer to see the parents as more emotionally involved in the situation, showing more support to the child.

This discrepancy in meanings demonstrates that the same piece of information can be understood differently, as people react differently to the same aspects of the video, but they also pay attention to quite different aspects of the video. In the format of meaning

construction, it can be interpreted as a duality in perceptions about parents' position in such situations and the uncertainty about what could be understood as an appropriate behavior when one's child is taken away by the officials. Some of the participants noticed that emotional reactions are normal, and thus are difficult to be controlled in extreme situations. Therefore, it is perceived as unethical to use the expressed emotions as an argument against the parents:

“I am confused by the general conviction that people have no right to show their emotions. Yes, we all know these classic rules (more than once discussed here) that in such cases one should be “cool as a cucumber”, cooperate, do not show any emotions that could attract attention from those who has come. But people are not robots, not all of them can make it. The woman did not succeed, she was more emotional in this situation, she started to shoot the video because she thought that this could help her. I do not know if it's right or wrong - there's no answer. We all are different, and this must be accepted. When society does not accept this - it turns out as it turns out”.

The participant referred to the conventional understanding of how one ought to appear in situations of this kind, which exists among the group members. In her comment she tries to challenge this understanding by relating it to the actual shortcomings of individuals' ability to control the emotions in a critical situation. Connecting that to the notion of individuality, she appealed to the whole society, not just barnevern, when talking about the difficulties with accepting emotionality as a normal human reaction to trauma and stress.

4.1.8 Concluding comments

The analysis revealed that the risk of barnevern is understood differently by various participants, and there is no single convenient meaning about it. Nevertheless, it was apparent that the understandings of the risk are closely connected with various aspects of the relationship between an individual family and the barnevern as an expert system. Thus, the construction of the risk goes far behind the sense of fear or communication problems. The figure 1. presents a schematic illustration of this construction as it appears from the results of the analysis. The central characteristic of this expert system is its perceived power over the individual, therefore, the risk can be connected to the perceived inequality of power distribution between the expert system and individual. This inequality is also intensified by the immigrant status of the participants, but the status is not the main aspect of the risk. The theme of immigrant status is connected to the perceived obligation of individuals to conform

to internalized demands of the expert system. Immigrants may have difficulties with interpreting those demands and adjusting to them, but the demands are seen as basically equal for both Norwegians and foreigners. The discourse of power is therefore central for how the meaning about this type of risk is constructed. Since barnevern is also understood as a public authority, the risk of barnevern may also be connected to the idea of symbolic domination of the state over an individual in a democratic society. Unequal distribution of power combined with the disruption of information flows due to the system's monopoly on the information, leads to the lack of trust in fair and rightful exercise of the power by the authorities in each individual case. The risk is attributed to the lack of trust, but it is perceived to have deeper roots than just the lack of formal information about barnevern and its work. The discourse of the risk of barnevern is a discourse of individual, a parent as well as a child, as a victim of the power system.

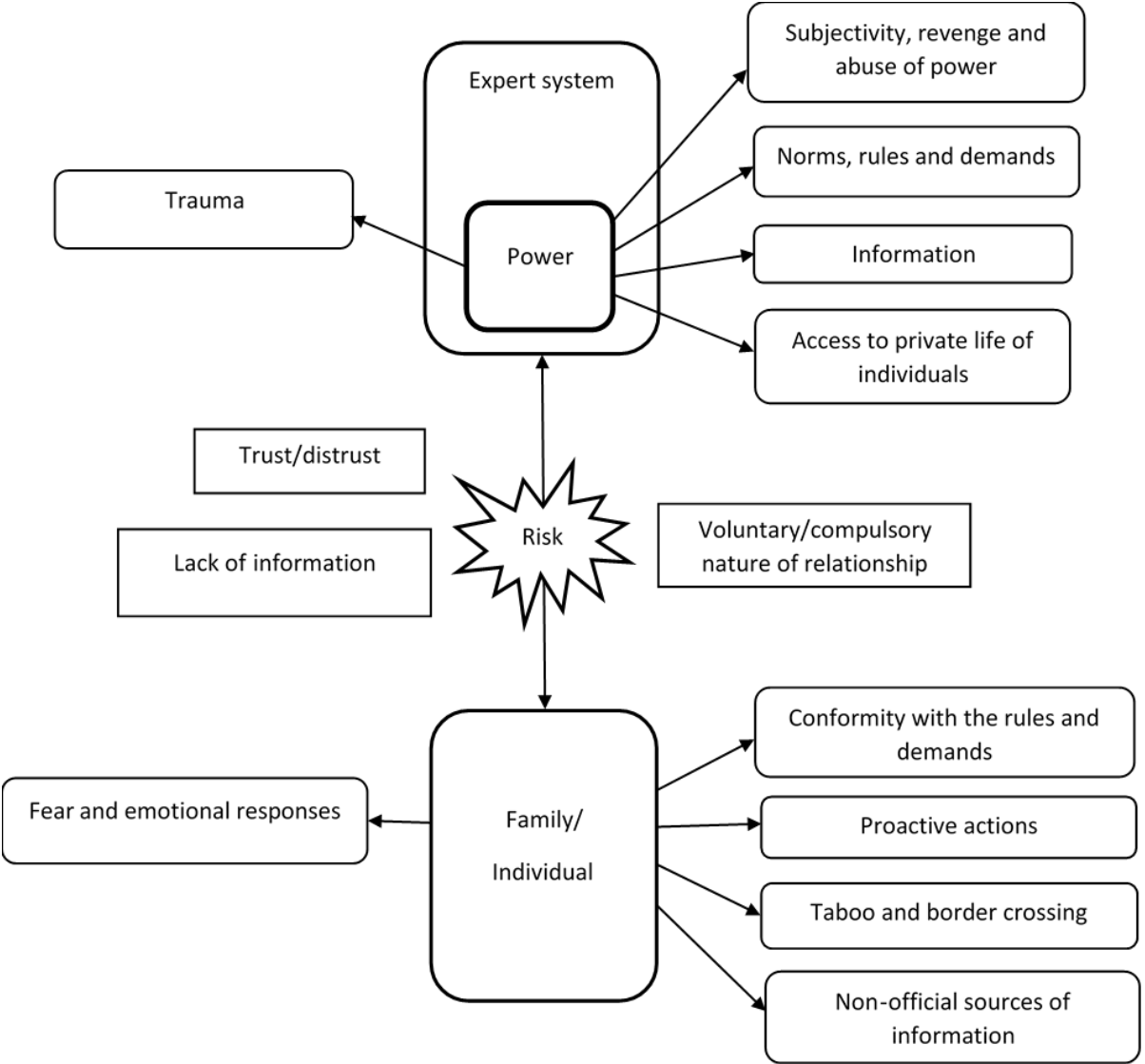


Figure 1. The construction of the risk of barnevern

4.2 The Discussion about risk of Vaccination/Child Immunization

4.2.1 Introduction

This discussion was started by a member who faced a problem of choice whether to vaccinate her child or not. In the following citation from the interview, that was conducted with the person few days after the discussion was started, she explained her position and intention with starting the discussion like this:

“(…) I have read articles on this issue for a long time and could not come to any unambiguous decision for myself. More precisely, I understood that it was necessary to vaccinate, but there was a lot of BUT for me and a great fear, having read everything on the Internet. (…) There is a lot of information in the Internet, but the more I read it, the more questions arose. The topic is difficult for me and I wanted to hear the opinion of the majority, including girls from the health care system, those who studied this issue in more details. In general, yes, my attitude to the problem has changed. I cannot say that I'm not afraid to vaccinate now, but I understand it in my head more clearly that I'm not ready to take such a responsibility NOT to vaccinate my child. So, in general, I listened to the majority.”

Despite of the existence of several previous discussions about this topic in the group, this particular discussion was very sizable and attracted attention of 67 participants, who wrote slightly over 300 comments (292 comments were included in the analysis while less informative and repeating comments were excluded).

Some language-connected assumptions should be made clear before reading the analysis of this discussion. In English it is usual to distinguish between child immunization and vaccination in general, while in the language used by the participants, such a clear division does not exist. The words “vaccine” and “vaccination” are commonly used in this and other discussions in the meaning close to what is entitled as “immunization” on WHO’s official document about vaccines (WHO, 2015). While the synonym “immunization” exists, it was never mentioned in the discussion. Thus, using the word “vaccination”, participants may mean both the child immunization and other types of vaccination. The discussion was started as a question about child immunization, but it appears that the participants tend to discuss it in terms of wider theme of vaccination as a way of protecting human body from infections. Child immunization in this paper is understood as a standard vaccination programme for children which is recommended by health authorities in different countries. Even though some of the participants noticed slight difference between various countries in terms of which vaccines are included in the programme, no significant discrepancies in these programmes between Norway and their home countries were recognized by them. Not all the participants

distinguished between particular types of vaccination/immunization, though some of them stressed the importance of differentiating between those. When some of them wanted to do so, they specified that they were talking about child immunization. Some of the participants named particularly vaccination against tuberculosis (BCG-vaccine) and Human papillomavirus (HPV-vaccine). In the paper the term “vaccination” is used to reflect the indifference existing in the language and to highlight the possible variations in interpretation of the comments. The term “child immunization” will be used in the cases where it is assumed as important to emphasize this particular type of vaccination.

4.2.2 Dual character of the risk and the problem of choice

The risk connected to the child immunization (but also other types of vaccination) is constructed as double-sided phenomenon in this discussion. Recognizing risk of complications of vaccinations, participants (not all of them, thought) at the same time realize the risk of getting infected and sick if their child is not vaccinated. Thus, both rejecting and accepting child immunization is seen as risky, and the choice is difficult because it cannot be avoided - parents have to take a decision:

“It turns out that this is a lotto... it’s a kind of not allowed not to vaccinate... And to vaccinate is fearfully... have to take the risks ... I know for sure that the consequences of vaccination from swine flu for some adults in Norway were very tragic ... But that’s a slightly different topic ... Vaccines for kids I would do... Worried, of course, but ...»

Basically, the person who started the discussion and some of the participants are facing a dilemma, where both alternatives are perceived as unwanted. Thus, the risk of vaccination is closely connected to the freedom of choice and accessibility of controversial information. As some of the participants mentioned, this choice was not that apparent in the past due to the lack of information about possible complications/side effects (and probably some other reasons). As they noticed, they or their parents had never wondered about possible dangers /complications of vaccination. One of the elder participants mentioned that in her comments: *“Yes, my son was vaccinated. He is already 34 years old. The grandchildren are not vaccinated. (...) ”*

“ Vaccinations suppress the immune system. My son was feeling sick after vaccinations, but at that time I knew nothing about possible danger. No one spoke about that ... ”

The participant depicts the absence of knowledge about the topic in the past, and the age of her son gives us a clear time perspective. She also juxtaposes the situation with her grandchildren who are not vaccinated. In her other comments in the discussion she

emphasizes parents' right to decide whether to vaccinate their children or not, based on the access to information. Thus, the absence of choice in the past is closely connected to the lack of information and knowledge about possible side effects of vaccination among lay people. Similar view is expressed by the person who started the discussion in one of her comments:

“I got all the vaccinations in [my country of origin] as all the children, but to be honest, at that time there was not that much information as now. Nobody was thinking about that, they just did it and that’s all. But to be honest, it seems to me that the number of complications and side effects now and then differs significantly. But in theory, vaccines should be cleaner and better in our time. But I can be mistaken and so amateurishly discuss this topic.”

As the author of the previous citation, she admitted the absence of information on the past and noticed lower awareness about the problem at that times when “nobody was thinking” about possible side effects. Her assessment of the number of cases with the complications of vaccination in the past and now can be interpreted in terms of increased availability of information about such cases for wider public and heightened focus on the problem in modern society. Based on the statements from this discussion, one cannot claim that the situation with child immunization for 30-50 years ago was perceived as compulsory, but there is a significant reason to state that it is understood as being less informed. Concerning the present times, the question of vaccination is clearly recognized as the matter of individual’s choice by many of the participants. This understanding is traced both when they describe their own doubts about the topic or giving examples of people who do not vaccinate their children. It is also expressed more indirectly when the participants mentioned the question of responsibility and blame of those who refuse vaccination.

As it was stated above, the risk of vaccination is seen as highly ambiguous by some of the participants, where there is a collision between the desire to protect the child from possible infection and the intention to avoid possible complications of vaccination. Nevertheless, not all the participants expressed such doubts about this choice, showing their strong position of being either for or against vaccination. The analysis of the comments revealed differences in how vaccination was categorized by the participants. Some of them conceptualized vaccination in the positive terms of protective measure against dangerous diseases. In contrast, their opponents expressed doubts about the necessity of vaccination, stressing possible complications and picturing child immunization as irreversible interference with the immune system of a child. At the same time, those who expressed uncertainty and ambiguity

about vaccination, appeared to have difficulties with categorizing it as either negative or positive phenomenon, but rather as consisting of both positive and negative aspects.

4.2.3 Crossing borders between risky and safe locations (spaces)

The duality of the problem with child immunization can be understood in terms of individual risk and as a risk for wider society, also at national and regional level. In connection to that the theme of crossing the borders between risky and safe spaces/locations appeared in the discussion.

During the discussion, several participants mentioned that there are some countries which are perceived to have higher risk of getting infected, while others are perceived as safer.

Countries such as Norway, Australia or Switzerland were used as the examples of safe countries, while most of the home countries were defined as risky locations. These perceptions can be connected to the official information from Norwegian Institute of Public Health about the countries with high occurrence of specific infectious diseases (Norwegian Institute of Public Health, 2018). Some of the participants referred to that “list of countries at risk” when explaining their decision to vaccinate their children. Even though the list reflects official data about occurrence of one particular disease - tuberculosis, it appears that understanding of higher risk is expanded also to other types of infections.

The notion of “crossing borders” can be understood here as changes in one’s geographical position, when travelling from “safe” to “unsafe” locations and crossing geographical borders between countries and regions. As immigrants, several of the participants mentioned that they travel to their home countries frequently, and thus, they expose themselves and their children to higher risk than Norwegians. One of the participants stressed the difference in perceived danger of getting infected in Norway and her home country:

“It is good that there is a fairly calm epidemiological situation here (although the other day I read about measles in Norway). And in [the capital of my home country] the number of children without immunization became high and whooping cough, measles, diphtheria walks quite through [occurs in] the kindergartens, and moms are worried each time, what the kids have picked up.”

Crossing of the borders between safe and risky countries is also depicted as a part of life, not just connected to the immigrant’s status of the participants when visiting their home countries, but to the general trend of travelling abroad among Norwegian population on vacations and for other reasons. One participant wrote:

“It is good to refuse vaccinations in a society where most of population are vaccinated. But it will be enough to visit a country where people are not vaccinated or not in such quantity.”

In this context, Norway is perceived as a safer place where one can live without vaccination, while other places, including the home countries, are assessed as risky locations, according to both official lists of “risky” countries and subjective perceptions of dangerous places. It is safe while staying in Norway but becoming unsafe when travelling abroad and to the home countries. Discussing border crossing, the participants are not talking just about geographical borders, but also about more symbolic borders between the wealthy western countries and poor countries, between those labeled as “civilized” countries and developing states. Though not all the participants labeled home countries as “third world” countries, they recognized both lower living standards and higher degree of poverty there, in comparison to western countries. Lack of financial resources, insufficient supervision of the representatives of risky groups (like prisoners and drug addicts), dangerous living conditions especially in prisons were named as some key factors of why the countries are perceived as unsafe and the risk of getting infected as higher than in Norway.

Border crossing can also be interpreted in the context of distinguishing between “clean” and “contaminated” places. Words “clean” and “contaminated” are used here in their metaphoric meaning, where clean is understood as free from infection and consequently free from risk.

The same borders can be crossed in the opposite direction, when someone is travelling from risky to safe countries, and this can be understood as a *contamination* of previously safe location. The citation presented below shows how one of the participants attributes “contamination” to the results of migration of people from risky to safe places:

“... half of the kids in our kindergarten are Turkish. We started at the kindergarten after the holiday, my child’s back was covered with pimply crust. They’ve had in fact some kind of trash [disease] in Turkey this year, maybe they brought it on themselves. There is also a family of Hindus in the kindergarten. They look clean, but they also travel [back home] on vacation - read about this country, look through the pictures from reviews ... they won’t get anything themselves, they have the immunity for it all, but we’re screwed. Pakistan, Somalia how do we know what kind of Ebola they will bring from there? I’m definitely for vaccinations and I skip over the opponents’ articles.”

Because the borders are violated, safe locations are also becoming risky. One does not need to travel to unsafe locations to get infected. Airports, amusement parks and kindergartens are depicted as the examples of public places in previously “clean” countries, which cannot be

defined as safe anymore. The following fragment demonstrates that the contamination is constructed by the participants as a result of reciprocal border crossing and refusals of vaccination in safe countries:

P1: "By the way, in Australia, they withdraw child benefits for the refusal of vaccinations. In Europe, they discuss the topic of taking over the experience of Australia. Too many refugees and they brought with them again what Europe have got rid of."

P2: "and there is an outbreak of measles in Italy and France among native unvaccinated citizens. One just need to understand that you cannot keep your child in a vacuum, and it's not so important if he get it from a child who has been on vacation or from someone else. The world is now too globalized. Here is a link to 3 new cases of measles in Norway."

P3: "In England, they found an active poliomyelitis in wastewater not so long ago. Awfully, we return to the Middle Ages."

The second participant in the fragment emphasizes the imminence of "contamination" as a result of globalization process. She stresses the irrationality of searching for the external source of "contamination", since it is impossible to live "in vacuum". In connection with that, vaccination is understood as a necessary barrier, a measure for keeping borders between risky and safe places to reduce the risk for those living in safe location. Therefore, the rejection of child immunization is categorized as non-acceptable social practice, as a demonstration of one's carelessness about the surrounding people and not contributing to the protection of the society from contamination. The blame for the contamination is not placed on those who physically cross the borders between risky and safe locations, but those who refuses vaccination in safe countries and do not contribute to sustaining of low-risk profile of safe locations. The following citation shows how a participant develops this theme in her comment:

"That's okay for the countries of the third world, in the sense that it's not okay of course, but most of you have understood me... It's clear why such a trash is happening there. But the developed countries, where the significant percentage of educated [population] and this fashion of non-vaccination. Why to add more? Polio was almost exterminated, but no, it crawled out again. Then the measles, it is spreading around in Europe/Russia again because of the valiant heroes... (...)"

Notably, the participant in her comment stressed on the aspect of education as a perceived rationale for the supposed better compliance among those who live in safer locations.

When the participants differentiate between risky and safe locations in relation to the theme of vaccination, many of them connect that to the perceptions of quality of vaccines in different countries. Safer locations are characterized by accessibility of vaccines of high quality, while those are not available for people living in risky locations. Several of the participants noticed that vaccination in Norway is perceived as safer due to the perception of higher quality of the vaccines, while the vaccines in the home countries are perceived as more dangerous. The low-quality vaccines are described as “unpurified”, “cheap” and “produced in the home countries”. It is perceived that those can cause severe complications as blindness, paralysis and even death.

Some of the participants mentioned that they would have been worried if they needed to vaccinate their children in their countries of origin. Thus, many of them built their argumentation for vaccinating on juxtaposing between Norway as a safe country to vaccinate and the home countries where vaccination is perceived as riskier.

4.2.4 Borders of the body and fear

Crossing borders can also be interpreted in terms of the borders of the body. Some of the participants, also those who expressed positive attitude toward vaccination, mentioned the fear they experienced when their kids were vaccinated. Here is an example of the comment where a person, who generally showed very rational approach to vaccination and referred to scientific research, described her feelings about the vaccination of her own children:

“I’m also a mother, and I’m also terribly afraid and worried. Every time they get something dripping or injecting (...)”

Thus, the discussion revealed another view on vaccination as a situation when borders of the child’s body are intervened. This intervention is perceived as frightening and risky at some unconscious level, and that feeling appears to be difficult to describe. One of the participants noted the irreversibility of this intervention: once the vaccine is injected, it is impossible to stop the process:

“(...) wait, you can always make vaccinations, give the child’s immunity to develop, give it time. But if you make an inoculation and regret it, you cannot bring it back. It’s only to pollute the blood ... In the meantime, while you are thinking, listen to the other mothers who vaccinated, how healthy their children are (...)”

A vaccine is viewed as an artificial substance which enters child's body and disturbs its natural processes, particularly, its immune system. Blood and brain are also named in the discussion as the vital parts of the body which may be affected by vaccination. Supporters of this opinion tend to diminish the seriousness of the diseases, presenting this as exaggeration of the experts and producers who are selling vaccines:

"(...) when I was bitten three years ago by a dog on the street, they took me to hospital to give me vaccine against tetanus... I talked there with the girl on duty about vaccinations ... she also said that they were taught at school to push vaccinations to clients, but most of the diseases are not dangerous, from some of the diseases you can get a vaccine / serum when you fell ill ... and I'm not talking about child ills... one suffers them in childhood and that's all ..."

In the discussion, the theme of vaccination is connected to the disturbances in functions of the brain, with autism as an example of possible outcome. Vaccination is not seen as a direct cause, but conceptualized as a trigger of genetic diseases, like autism, which may be hidden and, thus, unknown to the parents and doctors prior to the vaccination.

Some of the participants, who positioned themselves as opposers to vaccination, described the way vaccination interferes with blood and immune system as something negative: the immune system is *"suppressed"* by vaccines, and blood is *"polluted"*. Vaccines were also defined as *"viruses"*: alien organisms injected in the body, they mutate and destroy child's immunity. In contrast, a participant with higher level of confidence about vaccination characterized this process in more positive way: vaccines *"teach"* the immune system to recognize dangerous infections. Therefore, vaccines are conceptualized in two contrasting ways. The first positions vaccines as enemies who present danger for the body, when entering its borders. The second view presents vaccines as helpers of the immune system, which assist the body to sustain dangerous infections and strengthen its borders.

The disturbances of immune system because of vaccination are connected by some of the participants to the emergence of cancer, but also understood as responsible for autoimmune diseases (as diabetes mellitus) and allergy. The following citation shows an example of such a position expressed during the discussion:

"And among other things, unvaccinated children usually have the strongest immunity and less or no crap like allergies and persistent acute respiratory infections. It is the vaccinated [children] who (for some reason) die from this or that, get sick of "child" types of cancer. In Canada in Quebec (this is a fact, look for information by yourself), there are 99% of MMR-vaccinated, but there was an epidemic of measles among the vaccinated. Non-vaccinated has

nothing to do with that. So what kind of hotbed of diseases can we talk about? No one vaccine in the world provides a guarantee that a person will develop immunity against what is being vaccinated. This is unfortunately a fact too.”

The participant highlights the absence of a warrantee that a vaccine will give the desired protection, questioning fairness of blaming those who rejects vaccination. Uncertainty about the effects of vaccination was referred to by some other participants. One of them, expressing doubts about the feasibility of vaccination against tuberculosis, wrote:

“I know cases when vaccinated children were ill with tuberculosis. The vaccine protects only from 3 forms of tuberculosis, and there are 21 of them. Therefore, the vaccination is not effective, in my opinion, but there is a huge number of side effects. I don’t want to introduce [to inject] this virus to my child.”

The uncertainty about the effectiveness of vaccines appears to be important for how risk of vaccination is perceived and assessed by some of the participants. Human body is assumed as a complicated domain which should not be intervened without a serious reason. Vaccination is not perceived as a sufficient reason for such intervention. When the image of vaccination as an irreversible intervention of body’s borders is combined with uncertainty about its effectiveness, the more complex picture of the risk becomes apparent.

4.2.5 Trust, information and experts

As the person who started the discussion admitted in her interview, there is a significant amount of controversial information about the topic available for wider public. Amount of negative information and the number of people who express concerns about vaccination leads to higher uncertainty and anxiety. Some of the participants expressed doubt about the roots of these concerns, it is perceived that they cannot be totally groundless:

“I understand all that. But why so many negative meanings? Why are so many people and doctors against it [vaccination]? There must be adequate reasons for that.”

The discussion gave the insight into how the participants acquire, interpret and use the information when assessing the risk of vaccination. They referred to the information from official and less official sources, scientific publications and videos on YouTube, blogs of private people and statistical data from health officials of different countries.

The information about vaccination can generally be divided in two larger groups: the one coming from experts and the one from non-experts. The later refers to shared personal experiences of friends and strangers, cases described in mass media and Internet, but also

rumors and anecdotes circulating in different environments without certain source of occurrence. Information from non-experts appears to have powerful influence on the opinion of the participants. The following fragment of the discussion demonstrates how the participants use non-expert's information to construct their perceptions of the risk of vaccination:

P1: Damn, just recently I've seen [...] program where a girl died from vaccination. And on request, the search engine produces many such cases. From what [did she die], I do not understand, a low-quality vaccine or an individual reaction of the body. Mine are all vaccinated, I have not even heard of complications before. Anyhow I think one should vaccinate but it's really scary (I'm sorry for such a negative comment, just so much for the story of this girl 😞)

P2: I think, low-quality vaccinations are imported to third world countries 😞, I remember in [my home country] there was a case (I think it was a rubella vaccine) that was brought in as a production test from India, and the kind [...] government did not pay anything, but as far as I know, they even got money for it, I remember there were many children affected ... it was a repeated booster in 10th grade ...”

The first participant in this short dialog refers to a tv-program and internet, without placing any doubt about the information she obtained there. Moreover, the participant admits that this information was so influential that it resulted in the re-adjustment of her position about vaccination: from being neutral to becoming afraid. The second participant refers to information which can be attributed to some sort of rumor, probably obtained from unverified sources. In spite of its precariousness, this information is actively included in the discourse of low-quality vaccines which are tested on citizens of poor countries.

The discussion itself can be understood as a large pool of information from non-experts, and several of the participants were deliberately asking about the experiences and opinion of the group members about different aspects of vaccination. Many of the participants devoted their comments to the description of their own experiences with vaccination. Notably, the reliability of this non-expert information coming directly from the participants was seldom questioned, in contrast to the information coming from those who positioned themselves as experts.

The information provided by experts appears to be valuable for the participants and many of them referred to some kind of expertise in their comments. Experts are understood here as

professionals who work in relevant spheres and thus owe specific knowledge which is not easily available to lay people. What is especially interesting with the participants of this discussion is that many of them have access to the expert information in several languages. In addition, the majority of the participants are accustomed with the experts who are popular in their home countries but unknown in Norway. Some of the participants highlighted the problem of overload of contradictory information from experts. Participants claimed that this information do not reduce uncertainty but confuses and leads almost to panic.

In conjunction with that, several of the participants spoke about the challenges for lay people with understanding and interpreting of the expert information. Notions of trustworthiness of the information sources, quality of information and trust/distrust in experts were also mentioned in the discussion. In the fragment of the discussion, presented below, demonstrates how the problem was discussed among the participants:

P1: There are two reliable women, who can be read and listened to. Both immunologists and candidates of sciences. One [Expert 1] works at Harvard, so this is not an actress (...). The second one is [Expert 2]. Her lectures are on youtube. Not crap as well. When became old, she came out and told everything. And why you can and should trust Relis²? I have read a lot of strange and contradictory things there. And when a pharmaceutical company advertises its drug and writes that there is nothing wrong with it, then who are they to trust them? And they've paid their money for the tests and research, and so on. there is nothing independent there. This is a stumbling business."

P2: "Yes, I also read a lot of strange and contradictory things. I do not consider [the country of origin] sources at all, unfortunately."

P3: "[Expert 2] is not an authority, but a laughing stock. One can laugh of her illiteracy. At the same time, she calls herself almost a professor and a Doctor of Science but does not have this degree / rank."

P1: "I'm not an immunologist, so I did not have any reason to laugh, because an ordinary person does not understand such difficult topics in detail. For me, farm. companies with their doctors are not authority. They have commercial interest. Independent scientists and physicians should have such authority. I mentioned her, because she is a real, not a hired actress on a tv show."

² RELIS is an independent medicines information service for health care professionals, based on national network of four regional medicines information and pharmacovigilance centers in Norway and funded by an unconditional grant from the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services (RELIS, 2015)

P3: "She's a virologist, not an immunologist, she does not have any medical education, only biological, but she talks about microbiology in a way that it puts her sanity at question. She has her own biology of cells.

She earns on her lectures and seminars, so her interest is difficult to call non-profit."

One of the participants appears to be more confident with biology and thus is able to notice the incompetence of the pseudo-expert. But as it was highlighted by her opponent, it may be challenging for lay people to distinguish between the true and false information. She rather assumes perceived independence of an expert and his/her attachment to scientific community as indicator of expert's trustworthiness. Also, understanding that the expert is a "real" person appears to be a crucial factor for her, and this "real" person gains more trust than unknown experts. Several of the participants shared that opinion, referring to "known" experts, like famous pediatricians. To straighten their arguments, the participants also named "close" experts – people from their acquaintances: relatives, friends, colleagues. Two examples of such references in the comments of two different participants are demonstrated below:

"My classmate is a head of a department of a tuberculosis hospital, also said that it does not give 100 percent protection, but he vaccinated his children and recommends everyone to do that."

"My two classmates are working on the development of vaccines in a large pharmacological company, both have vaccinated their children."

In those two comments the authors made it explicit that they knew the experts personally, apparently to reaffirm the reliability of their experts. The statements would sound differently and probably lose their persuasiveness, if they just declared that some unknown doctors or employees of pharmacological companies do vaccinate their children. References to "close" experts give additional perspective on the understanding of how different participants appraise the risk, since some of them have more access to the information and meanings via their acquaintances. Thus, they have the opportunity to validate controversial information, while others have just to rely on their own assessments of the information.

Some of the participants referred to the widely-known expert systems like health officials in Norway and home countries, WHO, "Doctors without borders", apparently considering those as more reliable sources of information, than opinion of single persons. One of the participants mentions that in her comment:

"But I do not read "contradictory" information, these are the times we live in - everyone writes what he wants. There is WHO, there is helsenorge, after all Wikipedia (not the best source)."

As it is stated in this comment, there is more freedom for individuals to declare their point of view publicly. Some of the participants recognized that there is almost no formal control of the information which is provided by single experts and so called “pseudo-experts”. At the same time, it is easier for any controversial opinion of a single person to reach wider audience due to the existence of the Internet and social media. One of the participants pointed out that statistical data from officials can be a better alternative to other types of information, since statistics about occurrence of complications from each type of vaccines are perceived to be more demonstrative. Statistics from the officials are also seen as more reliable source of information. The participant stated:

“Because it is wrong to send the audience to read academic articles. I'm talking about information for which the agencies that provided it were legally responsible. When there is statistics for each vaccination, it is much easier. It is difficult, when the public information contains only flimsy proclamations that everything is "safe". 1 case per million is really safe, but it's still not zero.”

The participant underlines the aspect of legal liability of public agencies for the official information they provide, as a reassurance of its reliability. This argument is presented in contrast to the data from scientific publications, which are usually subjects for contradictions and scientific debates. The statistics are also seen by her as a more persuasive way of presenting information about the risk. In her other comment the participant shows how statistical data about vaccination can be used for the assessment of the risk, also by a lay person:

“I was looking for data about HPV and stumbled upon excellent epidemiological data on vaccination in Japan. All the cases of death, disability, and hospitalization costs caused by vaccination in their main types. (...) If we exclude such vaccinations as influenza, encephalitis and smallpox, in 7 years 320 new cases of complications per country with a population of 120 million, i.e. somewhere 45 cases per million vaccinated. The chance to die in a car accident in Norway is 4 cases per 100 thousand people, that is, 100 times more than getting complications from vaccination. Without statistics, reasoning about what is safe / dangerous – is unserious, look at the numbers and decide for yourself, if you think that it's dangerous.”

The participant appraises qualitative statements about safety of vaccinations as less informative, because it is unclear what “safety” means in this context. Quantitative data about diverse types of vaccinations are considered as more visual, especially when presented in comparison to the statistics about other types of risky activities, like driving. In one of her

comments she mentioned that also data about diverse types of vaccines can provide sufficient ground for assessment of what can be understood as “safe”:

“It's sad that here [in Norway] they are hushing up and telling that all the vaccines are "safe". In fact, there are safer and less secure. It is better not to do the new ones - when the risk is one for 5 thousand for example, then preliminary studies may not reveal it. I would prefer real data, then people will not be so worried about standard vaccinations, about which there are very serious data about reliability.”

In contrast to the views, expressed by other participants about safety of vaccination as something opposite to danger of getting infected, this participant suggested to assess the safety of each concrete vaccine in relation to other vaccines or other types of risky activities. Thus, the distinction between “safe” and “less safe” vaccines becoming a part of the discourse about the risk of vaccination. Some other participants shared this opinion, depicting vaccine against flu as an example of “less safe” vaccine. It was noticed though that such type of assessment depends on accessibility of statistical data, and not everybody knows where they can obtain this information. The person who referred to the information from Japan, admitted that she found it occasionally while searching for some other information. Moreover, she had to translate the information from Japanese, using online translation programme. Another challenge with statistics, mentioned by one of the participants, is difficulty with interpretation of the data for people without special knowledge about medicine, biology or statistics:

“To do this, one must understand presented statistics and what there is little/much and how this relates to the probability of disease and death from this disease.

Data was also cited from pubmed³ and from other sources, but people do not usually want to delve into it, since it is dry and incomprehensible.”

An interesting element to consider is the expression of distrust in information about the past: some of the participants noticed that the commonly-shared picture of the pandemics of the past may be “*just wild fantasies of historians*”. This was written ironically by one of the participants, who positioned herself as a strong proponent of vaccination. Nevertheless, the same idea was repeated in the discussion by several other participants. They expressed doubts about seriousness of the diseases and suggested that the death tolls were exaggerated. The argumentation of the proponents of the vaccination in this discussion was built mainly on the basis of conventional construction of the past. This construction rests on the assumptions that

³ PubMed Central is a free full-text database of biomedical and life sciences journal literature at the U.S. National Institutes of Health's National Library of Medicine (NIH/NLM) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>)

horrible diseases were infeasible part of human life in the past and that epidemics killed millions of people before the vaccines were invented. Basically, our understanding of the past is constructed on the ideas and conclusions of scientists and on their interpretation of the documents and artifacts left by our ancestors. Besides that, our perceptions of the past may be influenced by historical novels, films, pieces of art and so forth. Even though this conventional understanding is assumed as genuine, there are still some basic uncertainty about how much this widely-shared knowledge reflects what really happened in the past. Notably, the participants are from the countries where the ambiguity of historical facts is widely discussed in the society, and they may be more accustomed to the skepticism about the past, than Norwegians.

Another aspect concerning the information about vaccination mentioned by the participants is time. Several of them noticed that scientific information can be quickly outdated and therefore non-valid. For example, the information about the connection between autism and MMR vaccine⁴ was quickly disapproved by the participants as outdated. Thus, utilization of information about the risk of vaccination is closely connected to the problem of being constantly updated about the latest publications and relevant research.

4.2.6 Consequences, responsibility and blame

Several of the participants characterized the risk of vaccination in terms of consequences of either accepting vaccination or rejecting it. A sizable part of the comments was devoted to the consequences of getting infected and sick for those who are not vaccinated. One of the participants used expression *“horror of consequences”* in relation to unvaccinated people who contracted a disease. Notably, the consequences of diseases are presented as more serious than possible side effects of vaccines by the proponents of vaccination. Consequences of non-vaccination are presented in their extremes: the participants named death, funerals, serious injuries/disability, infertility as possible complications of the diseases, while allergic reactions and fever were mentioned as “typical” side effects of vaccination. Perception of seriousness of the diseases are straightened by the consideration that in the modern society people lack experience with those diseases:

“(…) we are just a generation that lived in an inoculated society and the horrors of measles or poliomyelitis have been heard somewhere far away, so we consider an allergy or AD

⁴ MMR vaccine - a combination vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella, is a part of standard child immunization programme in Norway, given to children at the age of 15 months (Norwegian Institute of Public Health, 2017)

[atopic dermatitis] as a serious illness. And the doctors themselves learned only from books about the types of rashes or barking cough, so they may not diagnose on time.”

In that comment the participant highlights the issue of “forgotten diseases” as one of the explanations of why vaccination is discarded in developed countries. The society do not “remember” the complications of the diseases defeated with the help of vaccination, and the perceptions of what is dangerous have changed significantly. Both individuals and experts have only heard about the diseases, so the problem of getting infected is not viewed as urgent today, while it was more prominent before. The participant developed further this theme in her next comment:

“And I wonder how our grandmothers / great-grandmothers took their children's deaths and accepted that not all will survive. Mine gave birth to 10 children, 5 of them survived and 5 died, all five from meningitis, pneumococcus, scarlet fever and other infant diseases.”

А вообще мне интересно, как наши бабушки/прабабушки относились к детским смертям и принимали, что детский возраст переживут не все. Вот моя родила 10 детей, до взрослого возраста 5 дожило и 5 умерло, все пятеро от менингита, пневмококка, скарлатины и пр детских болезней

In this comment the perspective of a mother facing death of her children is put in focus. Not only child’s death itself is seen as the consequence which is worth to consider seriously, but also suffering of the mother who lost her children is shown more explicit in the comment. The participant includes both emotional and cognitive components of mother’s suffering: on the one side, the mother felt grief and pain, on the other side she was aware of imminence of the loss since the risk of infection was relatively high. Apparently, this is done to stress the difference between the situation before and now.

Another participant shared similar view on the problem of “forgotten diseases” and the dangers connected to those, but she relates that to the perspective of the whole society, not just to a single individual:

“How long have children died in dozens of diphtheria? How long did millions of people die of pandemics? We lost a sense of fear for our children in this regard, and after all, a couple of hundred years ago in a family of 15 children 5 could survive.(...) But I think that such irresponsible people, this is an evil and a hotbed of diseases for society, because there are people who would like to, but not be able to vaccinate their children, and such irresponsible ones endanger lives not only of their own, but also of others.”

This comment can be interpreted as both emphasizing the perceived risk for individuals, but also the risk of infections at the level of society. The participant stressed on the

interconnectedness as a feature of modern society: when exposing ourselves to higher risk, we simultaneously increase the risk to others. The problem of vaccination is assumed as a matter of individuals' responsibility for surrounding people and particularly for the most wounded members of the society (newborn infants, disabled people and those who suffer from immune diseases and cannot be vaccinated).

On the other side, those participants who expressed negative attitudes to vaccination, tended to emphasize the consequences of vaccination, while the diseases were presented by them as less dangerous. One of them referred to her own negative experience when her child become seriously injured after a vaccination. The following piece of the discussion demonstrates how she narrates her story, and how another participant – a proponent of vaccination - reacts to that:

P1: "Well, my eldest got one from diphtheria-tetanus-whooping cough the next day he got cramps ...for 3 months he did not move at all until I gave physiotherapist and the hospital a scolding, they had not reacted... at 9 months, they woke up and said that it cannot be cured... 2 more years they drove with a diagnosis ... (he had one congenital problem, but that could not affect the motor skills (this was confirmed in the [hospital in homeland]...)) then to all my complaints that the vaccination played a role, they were hiding their eyes, did not respond to that and I finally received an answer "Well, it's good that he lives in Norway, disabled have good life here..." he is [more than 10] now, still struggling with the system that just wants to put him in a wheelchair, although the child goes well with a walker...."

P2: "Well, this is an exception, usually the consequences of the diseases are more frequent than from vaccinations..."

While the first participant disclosed the story of her personal hardship, most likely caused by vaccination, her opponent attempted to normalize the situation by labeling it as an exception, which doesn't happen frequently. She tries to shift the attention from the severity of the complication to its relatively low frequency.

The theme of consequences was closely connected to the themes of responsibility and blame. While writing about the consequences of non-vaccinating, the proponents of vaccination emphasized parents' responsibility for protecting their children from possible infections and diseases. Some of them connected refusals to vaccination to "anti-vaccination programmes" and regarded such a behavior as a kind of fad, when people choose not to vaccinate because of subjective reasons, without seriously considering possible outcomes of such a decision. Such outcomes are also connected both to possible consequences for each single child and to the aftermath of those for the whole society:

P1: "Huge irresponsibility of the parents - the refusal of vaccinations and unreasonable intake of antibiotics.

Parents who refuse to vaccinate think first of all about themselves and their fears, and not about the child, his safety, and the safety of the society in which this child will live."

P2: "Selfishness. We do not have the right to deprive the child of the safeguard ..."

Those participants place the blame on the parents who refuse to vaccinate their children.

Children *"pay with their lives"* for parents' delusions and fears. Thus, fear is conceptualized as irrational reaction which should be suppressed by the logical reasoning about the advantages of vaccination for the child and the society. Notably, several participants expressed fear of feeling guilty and blaming themselves if their child gets sick, and named that as an argument for vaccination. One of the participants noted:

"Yes, there is always a risk. But I would never forgive myself if I did not vaccinate and the child in the future fell ill with one of the diseases."

Alternatively, one of the participants mentioned a strong feeling of guilt when her child showed symptoms of autism after he got vaccination. She wrote in her comment:

"I think you would not talk so categorically about irresponsibility, if the situation was like mine. I was responsible and did all the vaccinations, after my [child]'s one-year vaccination, autistic signs clearly showed up, I sobbed, I could not forgive myself, had been living with this horror and a sense of guilt for many years, I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy. luckily this year due to the new confirmation of the diagnosis they did a [genetic] test and found [gene]. it was nobody's fault, just a fatal accident ... all the years I blamed everyone and everything ... so that each parent has the right to choose, and in others countries they even do not take such [genetic] tests ... the doctor even said that 90% do not find anything, but I insisted to do the test and it proved to be right, it has become a little bit easier and comprehensible, what and how, and the feeling of guilt has decreased...."

The impairment of child's mental health was initially attributed by the participant to possible complications of the vaccination. The comment shows strong expression of feeling guilty, and the situation is characterized as a "horror". It is notably how the participant formed the narrative as a single piece of text without using points but ellipsis, also in the end of her comment and abandoning capital letters. Previously cited narrative of another participant, who wrote about experienced complication of vaccination, had the same structure. It appears as the participants rushed to betray their stories in one breath and didn't have time to pauses. It can also be interpreted as an expression of uncertainty about the causes of the

complications. The author of the second narrative mentioned in her subsequent comments that she still suspects that the “autism”-gene was activated by the vaccine. The ellipsis in the end of those two comments invites readers to make their own reflections about the narratives. It also highlights the fact that the stories are not over for the participants and they continue to experience perceived consequences of the vaccination. In addition, both the narratives, explicitly and implicitly reflect the uncertainty about the responsibility of the health care system for possible complications. In the first narrative the author concluded that they are still “struggling with the system”, while the author of the second story noted that she had to insist on doing the test for her child. Another participant outlined this uncertainty in her comment:

“In my country when someone refuses vaccination the nurses tell: "If anything happens to the child you will be responsible for rejecting vaccination!" But I've asked them: And if something happens with a vaccinated child, isn't that the parents who bear all the responsibility and burden? After all, doctors do not recognize these consequences! Silence was in response! In general, moms! You have to decide by yourself anyway! Nobody can really advise you! Everyone has her own truth and experience! Every child is very individual! Not harmful for one but contraindicated for another!”

It is perceived that doctors and health officials are reluctant to recognize possible consequences of vaccination. The participant stressed also the problem of individual choice of parents who cannot blindly trust the experts and officials. This choice is difficult because the responsibility for either rejecting or accepting vaccination is attributed chiefly to parents, and just indirectly to doctors and health care officials who encourage people to vaccinate their children.

4.2.7 Concluding comments

Due to the results of the analysis, the risk of vaccination may be understood as a socially constructed risk, grounded on the freedom to choose if one wants to vaccinate her/his child or not. This risk is therefore not just conceptualized as an individual risk of getting infected, but rather seen as a complex construction of interconnected underlying risks. Moreover, those underlying risks are viewed as the results of social processes and practices, both at micro and macro levels. The risk can be presented as an uncertainty about the choice between the two alternatives: *to vaccinate* and *not to vaccinate*. These alternatives are connected to respective underlying risks. The information from various sources about those risks plays a significant role on how the individuals appraise each of the alternatives. Variety of variables may be

responsible for how the information is obtained, processed and used by individuals and groups. Risk of getting non-valid or insufficient information is included in the discourse as a part of the construction, not just as an assessment tool. Emotional reactions and fear are also a part of the construction and may affect both the perception of the risk and correlate with the processing of available risk information. A variant of graphical presentation of this construction, based on the results of the analysis is demonstrated in the figure 2.

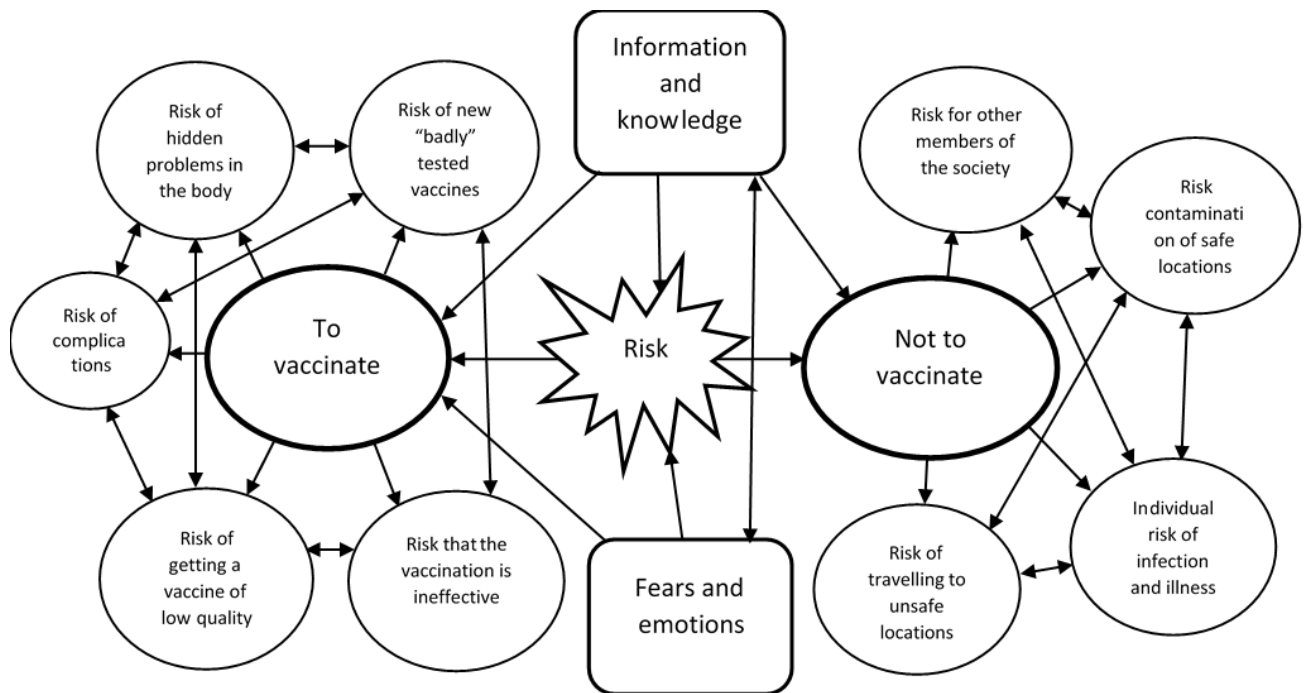


Figure 2. The construction of the risk of vaccination

5 DISCUSSION

The two risk-related discussions, which were analyzed in the study, cover two diverse problems, which may initially be perceived as completely unrelated to each other. Perhaps the only aspect which is obviously common for those two is that those risks are child-related. The topics evoked special attention of the members of the group, which led to the impressive sizes of the discussions. Jackson and Scott (1999, p.86) provide an explanation for such a preoccupation of child-related risks in modern society by presenting childhood as a social construction where children, at least in our Western society, are conceptualized as “particularly cherished beings”. This underlying understanding of children as highly valuable members of the society leads to the perceptions of special vulnerability of children to various risks. This insight is important but not the only aspect which unifies these two discussions and

the risk constructions which emerged from those. In this section, I will make an attempt of lift the findings to the higher analytical level of societal safety by approaching them through the format of two sociocultural risk concepts: Foucauldian “Governmentality” and Reflexive Modernization concept. But at first, I will give a brief review of the findings and discuss why the problems addressed in those discussions are relevant for risk-related research.

5.1 Summarizing findings

What I have found in the both discussions were that the constructions of the risks are more complex and comprehensive than it may be expected from informal discussions on social media. The constructions are both interesting, unique and depict the very broad picture of the discussed problems. They include such a variation in aspects and nuances, that the analysis of those led to the expanding of my own understanding of these risks as socially constructed phenomena.

5.1.1 *The discussion about barnevern*

The results of the analysis of the discussion about barnevern demonstrated that the perception of dominating power of the expert system is counterbalanced with the proposed tactics of “playing by the rules” as possible measure for risk reduction and a mechanism of self-governance. The risk is understood as a result of individual and group distrust in the functioning of the relationship between the powerful expert system and relatively unprotected immigrant family. This disproportional allocation of power leads to the perceptions of insecurity and vulnerability among the participants and enhances their desire to protect themselves and their families from possible “attacks” of power system. Among other strategies and tactics in withstanding the threat, they use the Facebook group as a place for constructing, accumulating and sharing collective and individual experiences of childcare in Norway in general and, particularly, in relation to barnevern. Those experiences are valuable for understanding and reflecting upon the variations of practices and behaviors, perceived as normal or deviating, acceptable or unacceptable in the host society. By collecting those experiences, the participants are coping with uncertainty about possible negative outcomes of living in Norway.

The perceptions that normal, non-violent and caring parents are also in danger of losing their children due to the involvement of barnevern destroy the feeling of “*ontological security*” and force the participants to reconsider their attitudes to barnevern from “believing in their adequacy” to the higher degree of uncertainty and skepticism about the rationality of their

assessments and actions. Ontological security is important for how individuals understand the world around them and their own position in this world, contributing to the formation of their identity (Kaspersen, 1995, p.140). The state of ontological security is vulnerable for immigrants due to possible difficulties in adjustment to the new society and culture: the surrounding social world may seem unfamiliar, strange and chaotic. It may be further connected to the differences in understanding of what is dangerous and safe, what is good and bad, what is normal and what is unacceptable in the new host society.

The idea of following the rules of the host society is proposed as a proper risk reduction measure, if one chooses to live in Norway. This strategy is helpful in restoring the sense of “ontological security” because it provides an explanation of *how* a normal family may become a victim of the system and *why* normal, non-violent parents may be treated by the system as dangerous. The image of “normal” parent is constructed as proactive person, attentive to the early signals of potential problems, cooperating and collaborating with all childcare-related expert systems she meets while upbringing her children in Norway. Any deviation from this image is perceived as risky since it attracts attention of the systems and may lead to undesired consequences. Cooperation with the expert systems is perceived as mandatory and ought to be based on the premises of the last. It is assumed that some experts do have knowledge and competence and therefore may see the problems which are non-visual for the parents, so the cooperation may be beneficial for the child in this way. But the main reason for the cooperation is the avoidance of possible punishment from the system in form of more stringent measures.

The exertion of power by barnevern against a normal family is connected by the participants to the trauma for the child. It may be a valuable insight for these who aim to decrease the perceptions of risk of barnevern among immigrants, that the participants are not considering themselves as the main victims of the system. Instead, they do place their children at the center of their concerns.

5.1.2 The discussion about vaccination.

The risk of vaccination is constructed as a dichotomy, where the participants were able to capture the complexity and ambiguity of the choice between two risky options. This complexity is manifested through the diversity of available information about vaccines and their impacts on the children’s bodies. Information from experts is not always presented in understandable, clear and unambiguous way, and official claims about safety of vaccination

do not sound as persuasive. What *is* actually safe, is not always clear for lay people, and awareness of possible side effects, even minimal, forced the participants to perceive vaccination of infants as a risky activity. Thus, vaccination is viewed as a matter of informed personal choice, not just a widespread practice.

Risk of vaccination is connected by the participants to their perceptions of vulnerability of human body to infections. On the other side the body is conceptualized as a complex domain and vaccination is viewed as an interference with its natural protective systems. Thus, perceptions of risk are connected to the deeper level of understanding of the concept of human body and its position in social and physical world. The proponents of vaccination showed tendency to view human body as a part of social reality and therefore opposed to nature. Nature with bacteria and viruses is dangerous for single individual and for the society in general, and vaccination is viewed as a legitimized intervention with the human body to protect the society from manifestation of natural hazards. Alternatively, opposers of vaccination assumed a body as created by nature and operating according to the natural, not human logic. Therefore, not infections, which are perceived as a part of natural world, but human intervention with the body in form of vaccination is conceptualized as dangerous and polluting. As humans pollute the nature and destroy natural eco-systems, so do the vaccines, as artificial substances, pollute flesh and blood and devastate the work of immune system of the body. These participants who positioned themselves as opposers to vaccination, were emphasizing the individual perspective on the risk of vaccination. They presented society as a sum of individual “victims” of biomedicine, suffering from poor immune system, allergies, autoimmune diseases and autism as side-effects of vaccination. Risk of infection was presented by them as a symbolic reason for vaccination, not a real social problem.

In contrast to that, the proponents of vaccination tended to emphasize social aspects of the risk of infections in modern society. This understanding is based on perceptions of higher exposure to risks when living in more globalized world. As immigrants who travel regularly to their home countries, the participants approach the risk of vaccination from the perspective of global society, where border crossing between safe western society and risky space of less developed countries occurs more frequently than before. The process of globalization is irreversible in the sense that it seems impossible to stop people from travelling. Thus, it is perceived that inhabitants of safe countries are responsible for protecting themselves and the society from possible infections.

The notions of social benefits of vaccination are contrasted with perceptions of individualized costs of serious side effects of it. The participants perceive their children as unique individuals and therefore there is a subjective risk of specific reactions to vaccination. Those perceptions are complemented by understandings of individual responsibility of parents for health and wellbeing of their children. Negative consequences of vaccination are presented as seldom exceptions, and individual experiences of those are difficult to acknowledge both for experts and public.

Thus, the understandings of the risk of vaccination presented in the discussion include both the individual and social perspectives on risk. The views of the participants are not homogenic, and therefore the construction of the risk of vaccination is quite controversial and includes diversity of perceptions, attitudes and experiences.

5.1.3 What is risk?

In the case of vaccination, the problem is easier recognized as risk in its classical terms. It is connected to the uncertainty about the choice, which may lead to both negative and positive outcomes. Moreover, the problem is recognized as health risk by the society, health authorities and scientists (Hobson-West, 2007, pp. 199-200), not just by the particular group of immigrants. The problem was also raised in Norwegian mass media, and one of the most recent articles about the topic (Molnes, 2018) can be used as an example of the debates around the risk. The results of the analysis may provide alternative insight in how lay people with immigrant background understand and approach the risk of vaccination, and how they construct their collective meaning about the risk as a part of their immigrant identities.

The problem which was addressed in the discussion about barnevern may be difficult to relate to traditional views on risk. However, the danger of losing their children and fear of barnevern is disturbing the minds of the participants. The risk in this case is not connected to conventionally perceived evils that threatens children and families, like pedophiles, poisoned food products or terrorists. It is rather constructed around the awareness of the existence of powerful expert system which may interfere with each single family and this intervention may lead to unwanted consequences.

Notably, Norwegian authorities are aware of this view, and devote considerable resources to “fight” this undesirable negative image of “the agency of state kidnappings” (Cremer, 2017; Berg et.al, 2017). These negative perceptions of immigrants are conceptualized as “myths” and the scope of the problem is reduced to the challenges with communication between the

families and the agency. The risk communication strategy applied by the officials is based on the presentation of statistical data, mainly focusing on the fact that the children with immigrant background are “slightly overrepresented” among all the children taken from their families in Norway (Bufdir, 2017). That demonstrates a strong techno-scientific approach to the risk (Lupton, 2013, p.26), where the communicators fail to pay enough attention to the socio-cultural and subjective dimensions of the risk. It is interesting, that those statistical data are not mentioned at all in the discussion, and the meaning about the risk of barnevern is constructed with the help of entirely different categories than statistical measures. Therefore, the data obtained from the discussion are particularly unique, providing insight in how the risk is discussed within the closed immigrant-milieu. I would claim that those data are qualitatively different from the interviews of immigrant families with direct experience of barnevern’s involvement, which were used in the official document of Berg et. al. (2017).

5.2 Knowledge as a power. Applying the concept of Governmentality.

Experts, information and power are the themes which intersect in the both analyses, which makes them outstanding candidates for being discussed in terms of Governmentality concept. Both discussions are focused on the experts who owe essential information about the risk, and this information provides a basis for meaning creation among lay people. Thus, the experts have power to shape and navigate public and private opinion and perceptions of the risks. While notions of power in various forms are far more apparent in the discussion about barnevern, the discussion about vaccination is chiefly formed around the information from experts as a basis for individual decision making.

5.2.1 *The power of expert discourse*

While in the first discussion the risk is explicitly connected to the specific expert system (barnevern), the expert systems in the discussion about vaccination are presented in a more diffuse way. Systems of scientists, vaccines’ producers, physicians, health care authorities, governments and so forth are melted together in a conglomerate of absent “others”, who provide the individuals with the possibility of choice. Parents are presented as those who are *voluntary* taking the risk, and the theme of external power appears as less apparent than in the constructed image of the risk of barnevern. Notion of power of the expert systems comes mostly undercovered via notions of knowledge and information.

According to main ideas of governmentality, all the perceptions of lay people about the risks in modern liberal society are shaped by underlying discourses, which are based on scientific

knowledge and used to “fabricate” an individual of late modernity (Lupton, 2013, p.116). It is logically to suggest that the discourses, constructed by this particular group of immigrant women, can be considered as predetermined by the underlying expert discourses, mediated to the participants via various invisible channels (Bell, 2011, p.105). Thus, the “local” discourse of the risk of vaccination is constructed on the basis of more dominating discourses of caring parents who have responsibility for protecting their children and of responsible citizens who have to contribute to the sustaining of healthy society. Those dominating discourses are recognizable in the argumentation of both the proponents and contradictors of vaccination. In their expressions of blame toward the parents who reject vaccination, the participants emphasized the impacts of such actions for the safety of the child and for the general society. Therefore, they stress on the moral obligation of individuals as parents and citizens to engage in risk-reducing behavior by applying available expert knowledge.

Participants’ choices to vaccinate their children because of travelling to their home countries can be considered as an example of self-governance and self-control. The BCG-vaccine is voluntary for those who live in Norway. The officials do not provide the “targeted” parents with the information about the horrors of tuberculosis to convince them to vaccinate but refer to the list of the countries “at risk”. This can be interpreted as an exertion of bio-power in its very pure form (Annandale, 2014, p.37), which is “played with a minimum of domination” (Foucault, 1991 in Warin, 2011, p.33). The grand-discourse of risk of tuberculosis as something frightening, but possible to reduce or avoid, is used to guide the parents to choose the vaccination as a proper risk-reduction measure for protecting their children. Therefore, power of experts is included in the risk construction rather indirectly via notions of information and expert knowledge as technologies of domination (Bell, 2011, p.102, Lupton, 2013, p.116).

The concept of “local” discourse is introduced here in order to highlight the difference between dominating discourses that are constructed by experts, politicians and mass media and those constructed by smaller groups of lay persons. Foucault did not divide between public and private discourses explicitly but distinguished between “technologies of domination” and “technologies of the self” (Warin, 2011, p.26), where the first is shaping the last. Thus, lay people’s understandings of themselves and the surrounding phenomena are grounded on the “discursive” technologies (Annandale, 2014, p.38, Tulloch, 2008, p.154). What is defined here as local discourses may be assumed as a part of Foucault’s “technologies of the self” (Bell, 2011, p.108). By using the existing expert discourses, the participants are

constructing their own local discourses of those risks they meet in everyday life. Foucault died before the era of social media, when the “microphones for the masses” (Murthy, 2011) became available for lay people across the world. Therefore, his position about the discourses which are actively constructed by lay people in online settings is unknown. Moreover, Foucault himself admitted that he had not given sufficient attention to the development of the concept of “technologies of the self” in terms of how these are understood and practiced by lay people (Warin, 2011, p.26). Lack of focus on individuals and their responses to the technologies of domination represents the main basis for critique of governmentality (Lupton, 2013, p.141). Therefore, the findings, presented in this paper, may be valuable for further development of the governmentality-concept.

5.2.2 Local discourse vs expert discourse

In the case of barnevern-related risk, the theme of power is far more prominent in the construction of the collective meaning. The discourse of victims of the system is actively constructed by the participants in contrast to more official, dominant discourse of children as victims of their parents (Barneombudet, 2018; Helmers, 2018). While this official discourse articulates a view on parents as a possible threat for their children, this understanding is just partly included by the participants in the risk construction. Instead of talking about the risk as exclusively a problem of violent parents, the participants set a clear division between “dangerous families”, where parents abuse their children, and “normal families”. Dangerous families are excluded from the discourse, and the participants do not even try to identify themselves with those. For example, the theme of allowability of corporal punishment is not even mentioned in the discussion. Dangerous families are considered as “a risk group” and barnevern’s involvement in those is perceived as reasonable and necessary.

In contrast to the official discourse, the risk of barnevern is constructed around the concept of “normal family”. The risk is not understood as a problem of violence against children or desire to conceal the prohibited practices of childcare, but rather as a problem of inappropriate cooperation between “normal” families and the barnevern. Inability of self-governance in form of compliance to preexisting norms and rules is characterized as irrational and risky behavior. If “normal families” fail to meet the expectations of dominating expert systems, they expose themselves at risk of being labeled “dysfunctional” and placed in the “risk group”. Therefore, the discussion showed that lay people are not always passive consumers of the existing expert discourses. They act with the higher degree of independence in constructing their own discourses of risks. It is unclear if this can be attributed to immigrant

background of the participants or to the fact that the risk is discussed on social media, probably both. As it is stated in Bell (2011, p.104) “[e]ach belief system (...) has its own methods of discourse in which knowledge is transmitted to others”. The official discourse of children as victims of their parents correlates with the preexisting collective experiences of child abuse as a social and health risk in Norwegian society. Those experiences have led to the changes in the belief system, and the discourse is justified with the developed body of expert knowledge about the origins and consequences of child abuse, and by the extensive statistical data collection about its impacts in form of direct costs for the society. At the same time, those experiences may be unknown for immigrants, and their belief systems are dissonant with the official discourse of parents as potential dangers for their children.

In response to the perceived risk, the participants suggest and apply the strategy of “playing by the rules” which is a strategy of self-governance. The participants construct their own image of the host society with its norms of “normality” and deviance and rules of the game. Their understandings of “normality” are closely connected to the expertise, so normality is not attributed to subjective understandings, but seen as a state which should be verified by the expert systems. Those expert systems may be considered as prototypes of “panopticon”: operating in tandem, they observe and supervise the families continually. Kindergartens, schools, communal nurses are “watching” the families, operationalizing Foucault’s idea of “inspecting gaze” (Annandale, 2014, p.37). The participants are aware of being watched and therefore choose strategies to demonstrate their “normality” via compliance. By exercising such a self-policing, they are trying to anticipate and avoid reactive actions of the expert systems.

5.3 Reflexive modernity: experts, traditions and trust

In this section, the finding will be discussed in the light of the concept of Reflexive modernity, with special focus on the issues of expertise, tradition and trust as parts of socially constructed risks of “Risk society”.

5.3.1 *Distrust in expert knowledge and a problem of pseudo-expertise*

The discussion about vaccination can be seen as an example of individuals’ distrust in the expert knowledge and the doubt about scientific optimism of getting control over the infections in modern society through the interference with the immune system of human body. The concept of risk society allows to view the problem of public distrust in experts’ information about the risk of vaccination, exemplified in the discussion, in a wider

perspective of general skepticism about positivistic ideas of scientific rationality of improvement of standards of living and reduction of the risks in the society with the help of technological progress (Lupton, 2013, p. 87; Zinn, 2008, p.27).

The problem of vaccination is presented in the discussion as a choice between two risky options, and advantages of vaccines are not taken by the participants for granted.

Immunization of small children is not just something that everyone does routinely, as it was for few decades ago. The participants approach the practice with reflexivity, due to their awareness of possible complications of both vaccination and non-vaccination. Some of the participants of the discussion expressed more concerns about the side effects of vaccination than about the danger of infection, unintended negative consequences of vaccination got more attention than its intended benefits. A representative of British health authorities, dr. Peter Fletcher (in Law 2006, p.182) defined that as a change of “balance in the risk-benefit equitation”: due to improved health and sanitary standards in postmodern society, the risk of vaccinations is viewed as more serious than it was before. Both the expression of doubt about the scientific claims of necessity to vaccinate and distrust in the information from health authorities, scientists and producers was prominent in the discussion, which can be attributed to the typical characteristics of Risk society (Lupton, 2013, p.100).

Human body in connection to vaccination may be viewed as an object to reflexive scientization (Zinn, 2008, p. 28). It is assumed that experts have extensive scientific knowledge about human body and they have achieved some control over the risk of infection with the help of vaccination. At the same time, scientific knowledge is fragmented, imperfect and continually modified by newer research. Thus, the information coming from officials is not trusted blindly, and some of the participants search for alternative opinion, instead of simply accepting the claims about the necessity of vaccination. Some of them refer to statistics as a more trustworthy basis for individual decision making, showing calculative attitude to the risk. Other participants choose to listen to controversial opinion of “scientific” revolutionists, assuming them as independent lionhearts, surrenders, who are not afraid to tell “the truth” about dangers of vaccination.

Individual capabilities to assess and utilize expert information were highlighted by some of the participants as crucial for being able to differentiate between actual and “pseudo” experts. The problem of pseudo-experts and their ability to reach wider audience with the help of social media was also apparent in the discussion. The aspect of pseudo-science as an active

contributor to lay risk perceptions, is not addressed specifically by the theorists of reflexive modernization concept, but the phenomenon has become a subject for intensive research in the field of sociology of health and illness (Hobson-West, 2007; Kata, 2012), though not as a part of risk society paradigm. Pseudo-experts and pseudo-science movements contribute to the amplification of risk by spreading controversial information among lay people (Kata, 2012, p.3779), actively exploiting the incompetence of the last in the particularities of microbiology, virology, chemistry and other fields of science related to the question of vaccination. What is particularly interesting with the findings obtained in this study, is that those demonstrate how the claims of pseudo-science are discussed and included in the collective process of meaning construction within the “naturalistic” settings of interpersonal communication about the risk. The participants confronted each other with their perceptions of the same information coming from pseudo-experts, while supporting or challenging the claims of the last. By doing so they actively negotiated the status of the pseudo-expertise in the emerging risk construction. Those processes are difficult to uncover through the data obtained with the help of traditional intervention-based data collection methods as surveys, interviews and experiments, presented in other studies about the topic.

5.3.2 Individual responsibility for vaccination and interconnectedness of different societal levels of risk in global risk society

“illness is a world traveler that does not need a visa”

(Brown, 2011 in Annandale, 2014, p.33)

The theme of distrust in the information coming from experts and pseudo-experts is prominent in the discussion about the risk of vaccination. At the same time, the meaning, constructed in the discussion, is also connected to the assumptions about the risk as produced by humans, not nature, and therefore related to the notions of individual responsibility and interconnectedness between individual and societal levels of vulnerability and risk. Those aspects are also highly compatible with the ideas of Reflexive Modernity about the changes of risk perceptions among lay people.

The construction of meaning about the risk of vaccination can be discussed in terms of risk as a phenomenon created by humans and therefore a subject to human responsibility, the idea which presents the main argument for reflexivity in risk society concept (Lupton, 2013, p.98). Infections and diseases are understood by the participants as rather social than natural problems. Their occurrence is explained in the discussion as an outcome of social processes like mass rejections of vaccinations and increased migration tendencies between safe and

dangerous parts of the world. The danger of infections is viewed by the participants as something that people possess on themselves, and the main responsibility for the outbreaks of “forgotten” infections in Western countries is placed on individuals who refuse to vaccinate their children. Thus, the process of the meaning construction about the risk of vaccination/non-vaccination may be connected to the deeper level of awareness about the existing interconnectedness between the choices of individuals about their own bodies (and bodies of their children) and growing vulnerability to infections in the society. The idea of border crossing, developed in the discussion as a possible transmission path for infections through individuals demonstrates that the participants conceptualize social reality as dynamic and interconnected, not static and isolated. The participants are capable to see themselves and their actions in connection to globalized world. An individual is viewed as a central actor in the risk construction, and his/her role goes far behind the traditional victim-position. The participants are aware about their agency and their power to contribute to the general epidemic situation not just in local, but also in global society. Their decisions about immunization of their children do structure and, at the same time, are structured by the external conditions, both at local and globalized level. The members of this relatively small group of female immigrants are in fact able to recognize the risk of vaccination as a phenomenon which goes far behind the individual risk of getting infected. They are able to comprehend the complexity and ambiguity of the risk and include it in their collective risk construction with a relatively high level of reflexivity.

5.3.3 Faceless commitment to absent experts and trust in “real experts”

The problem of “disembedding” character of expert systems and the difficulties to maintain trust to “invisible” experts is also a part of the risk constructed by the participants. The experts and authorities are distant and absent, as well as the producers of vaccines, but their claims and actions are influencing everyday lives of average people. Therefore, the distance between the experts and end-users of vaccines may be connected to the problem of trust as traditionally based on “facework commitment”. This traditional commitment is widely replaced by “faceless commitments” to the abstract systems of modern society (Kaspersen, 1995, p.134). In the case of child immunization, the participants as parents are actively exposed to the information provided by absent and unknown experts through official booklets, articles, recommendations of official websites and so forth. Thus, they are forced in “faceless commitment” (Kaspersen, 1995, p.134) to the abstract systems of modern health care. This dependence on the meaning of abstract, distant “others” is not satisfactory to

establish trust-relationship, so the participants are searching for “real” experts to reassure the claims of “absent others”. They want to know the opinion of real persons: doctors, researchers, nurses, average people, not just a team of unknown researchers who claim that vaccination is safe. Therefore, the participants use their network (friends, classmates, relatives) to gain experience with the risk. Forums and discussion groups may also be understood as spaces where lay people get opportunity to gain such type of risk-experience. What is special with the particular group on Facebook, is that it is a relatively stable community, and its members have opportunity to get to know each other through regular online interaction with the same users.

5.3.4 Societal profits vs individual consequences.

Such characteristics of modern society as mass production of medicaments and availability of health care services to wider masses of public in developed countries are also central for understanding of social frames, which are included in the risk construction. Suspicions about self-interest of pharmaceutical companies to maintain high consumption of vaccines among society members is also included in the risk construction. Concerns about the “hidden agency” of pharmaceutical giants in promoting the need of vaccination are used by some of the participants as counterarguments for trusting scientific research as an independent knowledge source. Pharmaceutical companies are suspected for directly influencing on scientific community in form of setting agenda for what type of knowledge they should prioritize. Thus, “The Big Pharma” are blamed for exposing the population to the risk of possible complications, while gaining financial benefits from the constant demand on vaccines in the society. When health authorities convince citizens to accept vaccination as a low-probability risk of acquiring larger societal benefits like herd immunity (Hobson-West, 2007, p. 198), this may shape the perceptions of inequality of the distribution of gains and losses among the stakeholders: the manufacturers get their profits, health authorities reduce the costs of curing possible outbreaks of diseases, while relatively few average families and individuals bear the main costs of possible side effects. The narratives of those two participants who experienced possible side-effects of vaccination demonstrate how seldom consequences of low probability risk are conceptualized as a burden placed chiefly on individuals and families. Those narratives reflect the problem of uncertainty about the causes of dramatic impairment of health status of the children and rigidity of health care representatives in their unwillingness to investigate the role of vaccination in those cases. The costs of the consequences are difficult to limit in terms of financial and material losses for

society and families. Personal costs of psychological and symbolic character when experiencing dramatic and irreversible changes in child's health condition are difficult to access and compensate.

5.3.5 Family as a part of individual identity-project

During my work with the analysis I was continuously reminded by the emerging categories about the more general profound changes in the society in terms of how the concept of family was modified drastically in the epoch of late modernity. From being predetermined by traditional views and constraints of social classes and gender roles, the phenomenon of family transformed to an individualized project, a part of individual's unique life course, perceived to be chosen and co-created by individuals themselves, rather than predestined by external conditions.

The nature and form of family itself has been changed (Kvvelo, 2010, p.181). From the perspective of reflexive modernity, a traditional family was a more stable and secure social structure, strengthened by the constraints of traditions, social classes and clear gender roles. Therefore, traditional family provided individuals with the feeling of "ontological security". In contrast to that, modern western families are more unstable and more dependent on expert knowledge and calculative attitudes of its members, than on traditions and values. A family may be seen as a part of self-identity project with "family planning" as a core idea. Individuals make reflexive decisions about the type of relationship they want to be a part of (traditional marriage, homosexual marriage/partnership, non-registered relationship) or about quitting the relationship they don't want to be a part of. Taking the immigrant status of the participants in consideration, the decision span also includes an alternative of relationship with a foreigner and a possibility of moving to another country because of family-related reasons. Additionally, the number of children in a modern western family is not viewed as random and unpredicted, as it was before, but usually attributed to individual planning and control, which is realized with the help of modern biotechnologies like usage of contraceptives, accessibility of legal abortion, artificial insemination and surrogate motherhood.

Nevertheless, the idea of "planned family" and perceived higher level of personal control over one's own life course gives no guaranty that the "family"-project will be realized according to the plan, and individuals are continually confronted with the uncertainty about the future of their nowadays relations, also those between parents and children. Thus, a family in the late

modernity cannot be assumed as a provider of “ontological security”, neither for adults nor children, with no means “*bolstering one against the uncertainties of the external world*” (Lupton, 2013, p.107). Rather, it may be conceptualized as probably the riskiest project of one’s own life. Therefore, the risk of barnevern’s involvement may be seen as a part of the general uncertainty and anxiety about possible external and internal dangers and threats, which may destroy the future of the family as it was planned.

At the same time, the assumption about higher individual control of and responsibility for the destiny of one’s own family, dominating in liberal Western society may create an “opportunity vacuum” for less privileged members of the society (Lupton, 2013, p156), with immigrants among them. They have to meet the expectations of the host society and experts, but may lack important material, social and cultural resources to engage in the project of self-reflexivity and apply calculative attitude to their life choices. Politicians, officials, social workers and average citizens may actually *believe* that every positive or negative outcome of individual’s life is mainly attributed to her own decisions and actions, and to lesser extend dependent on her social position and external conditions in the society. This widespread attitude may result in systematic underestimation on of the preexisting critical conditions in the society which increases vulnerability of some groups and categories of people to certain types of risks.

5.3.6 *Expert knowledge vs traditions*

If the risk of vaccination is mainly connected to the variety of opinions about the advantages and side effects of vaccines, the risk of barnevern is constructed around the problem of distrust in the expert system. This distrust may be attributed to barnevern’s approaches and practices which deviate from traditional views of immigrants on parent-child relations.

The risk of barnevern may be approached from the perspective of modern family which has become less traditional and is more based on reflexive attitude of individuals to the relationship with their spouses and children, and what choices they make about the fulfillment of their parental duties. Modern parents cannot rely on traditions when upbringing children, their reflexivity is based on the awareness of “internalized demands” about “good childcare”. Childcare has become a subject to scientific research, and psychologists, pediatricians, teachers, social workers and other specialists are coming with the evidence-based recommendations about parenting. In his book “Children at risk” (in Norwegian “Barn i risiko”), Kvello (2010, pp.34-35) comes with detailed descriptions of “not good enough

childcare”. Several of the proposed impairments are not directly connected to physical violence and child abuse but relates to parents’ ability to foresee possible risks for child’s health and wellbeing and act in advance by contacting professionals for help. Giddens’ claim about modern society’s preoccupation with the risks and desire to “*bring[ing] the future under control*” (in Lupton, 2013, p.99) is realized in form of internalized expectations about “good enough childcare” as a future-oriented practice. Like with the choice of lifestyle, modern parents should carefully choose their style of parenting to minimize possible harmful impacts of it on child’s mental and physical health in the future. Thus, social transformation of parenting in the late modernity may be assumed as a matter of individual choice about parenting style, narrowly guided by the internalized demands and pressure from child welfare services. Basically, the development of “evidence-based” expert knowledge about “not good enough” childcare practices may be seen as a part of more general process of scientific rationalization of family relationship with the aim to reduce individual and societal risks in postindustrial society.

Contradictions between traditional and expert knowledge are also included as a part of the risk construction about barnevern. Traditional views on parents as better caregivers than public agencies and systems were expressed both directly and implicit in the discussion, as well as perplexity about the widespread controversial meaning, dominating in Norwegian society. Those contradictions may be directly connected to the core doubt of immigrants about the validity of expert claims that biological parents represent the main risk for their children. Evidence-based knowledge developed by childcare experts about the extreme cases of domestic violence against children is used actively in promoting the negative image of biological parents in modern Norwegian society. The characteristics of dysfunctional and violent parents are extrapolated to the general population of mothers and fathers, promoting the understanding of parents’ evilness as not exceptional, but rather normal and widely spread phenomenon. This assumption is conflicting with traditional perceptions of mother and father as closest persons to the child, applied by the participants when they discussed the case with the Canadian boy. Such an antagonism and rhetoric of blind generalization may contribute to a doubt among immigrants about the trustworthiness of those claims, because these turn their world upside down and force them to reconsider their views on the agency and its trustworthiness. As it was noted in the discussion, barnevern is conceptualized by some of the participants as a threat to traditional family-values. Notably, those traditional values, in contrast to the views of radical feminists (Kelly, 2003, p.38), are not perceived by the

participants as potentially harmful for women, children and families. Rather, those values are viewed as something that should be actively preserved by the society. Thus, a deeper underlying disagreement in the society about what should be defined as a danger – parents or the system – may represent one of the central elements of socially constructed risk of barnevern.

5.3.7 Trauma, trust and unrecognized failures of the system

Distrust in and skeptical attitude to the system among the participants may also be connected to their awareness about the trauma the children experience when are taken from families hastily and mistakenly, due to unclear reasons, not directly connected to violence and maltreatment. This side-effect of agency's work is gradually neglected by the agency and the officials, even though controversial cases are known to public via mass media and, lately, through the powerful and wide-reaching technology of social media. The notion of trauma for the child, inflicted by the hasty and unreasonable actions of barnevern, was the most prominent part of the risk construction, which appeared in the discussion. The participants showed clear tendency to put child's interests on the first place in the discussion. Even though many of them expressed empathy and compassion with the mother, they stressed particularly that the boy, not the mother, was the main victim of the situation. The participants showed quite realistic and calculative attitude to the situation, when comparing negative consequences of violent appearance of officials (barnevern and police) with the possible risk of "not good enough childcare" in the case with Canadian family (assuming that the boy was not in danger of domestic violence).

Growing awareness about the problem of excessive attention of barnevern to normal families and exaggeration of the problems of childcare was recently demonstrated by both Norwegian and international press (Davies et.al, 2016, Stene, 2018). Nevertheless, there is no official statistical data about the number of "mistakes", and the possibility of making this kind of mistake is not paid much attention to by the agency itself or other officials. Moreover, the agency shows no intention to address the problem of power abuse by social workers and to acknowledge possible dangers of subjectivity in their assessments when interfering with families. Such reluctance of barnevern to admit their failures and arrogance when expressing no regrets about their actions (Davies et. al, 2016) reinforces the distrust and fear existing among the wider public, and particularly among immigrants. It would be a relevant and highly demanded aim for possible research on that topic to identify explanations for this reluctance. In this paper I would emphasis one possible explanation, namely, perceived risk of losing

even more trust from the population if barnevern admit their mistakes, connected to low competence and improper exercise of authority among its employees. This position is understandable, but at the same time doubtful. It is a well acknowledged fact that there are no systems existing in our human world, which are able to operate completely without errors. Denial of possible failures in a system is defined by Reason (2008, p.77) as “*antithesis to mindfulness*” and is regarded as a major threat to safety of operations. Traditionally, Reason and other “safety”-theorists have focused on hazardous technological systems, but their safety claims are fully applicable to a wider range of public systems like prosecuting authorities, welfare organizations and healthcare providers. Awareness about the risk of making a mistake and open dialog about possible preventive solutions may in fact contribute to increasing trust in barnevern as a powerful public agency.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of meaning construction about risks as an outcome of social interaction among women with minority background in the context of closed Facebook group. The main conclusion which can be drawn from the analysis of the discussions, is that those may be interpreted as socially constructed risk discourses, where risks were presented as complex, comprehensive and multidimensional phenomena. Participants’ opinions and perceptions appeared in the discussions in form of collectively written narratives. Therefore, the constructions of risks are both nuanced and authentic, and they demonstrate how the risks are conceptualizes as a part of everyday life of the participants. The participants were not just sharing information, experiences and opinion about the discussed risk-related topics. The discussions represented attempts to make sense of those and allocate them in the system of perceived social reality of host country. Therefore, the discussions presented an exceptional insight in how the risks are viewed by the participants as socially constructed phenomena and how the process of meaning construction happens in the context of social media.

The main difference between the two risk constructions is that the risk of vaccination is conceptualized as dichotomy – a choice between two options, and this dichotomy was sustained during the discussion through the debate between the participants who positioned themselves as proponents and opposers of vaccination. Due to their practices of visiting their home countries, the participants connected the risk of vaccination to the problem of frequent

border crossing between more and less risky locations and approached the risk as both a problem of individual choice and a more globalized problem of transnational society.

In contrast, the risk of barnevern is constructed as a part of the relationship between immigrant families and Norwegian Child Welfare System as a powerful expert system. This relationship is perceived as involuntary and undesired, and the risk is not viewed as a problem of choice but understood in connection to the perceived inequality in power distribution between barnevern and a family. The main strategy, that was suggested by the participants for reducing this risk is to follow the rules for parenting, that exist in Norwegian society. It is assumed that immigrants, especially those who voluntarily moved to the country, are responsible for learning and adjusting to the rules of the host society. Therefore, they are perceived to be accountable for possible outcomes of their actions, positive or negative.

The findings are interpreted in this paper in the light of the Risk society – perspective and the perspective of Governmentality, both of which refer to socio-cultural approach to risk. From the perspective of Governmentality, scientific knowledge about vaccination or about “good enough” childcare practices, may be viewed as a set of official discourses which shape individuals and groups’ opinion about the risks. Therefore, knowledge and information about the risks may be understood as a distinct type of power, used in a more discreet way to govern people and their behavior. At the same time, the discussions showed that lay people may express views, dissimilar to the official discourses, and that was particularly obvious in the discussion about the risk of barnevern. The theory of Governmentality does not provide an explanation for that, but the perspective of Reflexive Modernization affords an alternative understanding of why this discrepancy may take place in the modern society. It may be explained as an outcome of growing distrust among lay people in ability of experts to eliminate or decrease risks. The findings in this project may also be viewed in the light of increasing individualization of modern society. In the risk constructions, created by the participants of the discussions, individuals are assigned higher level of responsibility for possible negative outcomes of their actions in connection to taking care of their children.

6.1 Contributions

The novelty of this project is that it connects such phenomena as immigration, risk perception and social media. In this project, social media are used both as a field of study, data collection method and the contextual frame for the analysis of the findings. The findings in this project contribute to the expanding of scientific knowledge about immigrants’ perceptions of risks in

Norwegian society and how those perceptions and meanings are constructed and mediated with the help of modern communicative technologies such as social media.

This project particularly contributes to development of more detailed knowledge about the attitudes of immigrant families to the Norwegian Child Welfare Service – barnevern. It gives opportunity to access the problem from the perspective of risk, which is an alternative to the approaches used in official reports and investigations. The perspective, applied in the project, provides with the alternative understanding of this problem as a socially constructed risk, where notions of power, information, traditions, emotionality and values are included in the risk image. I suggest that changes on organizational level are required to achieve sustainable improvement of barnevern functioning in multi-cultural society. I also suggest that officials' acknowledgement of the risk of making a mistake when barnevern interferes with families and possibility for abuse of authority by social workers will contribute to strengthening social trust in the agency. The findings of this research project also provide with deeper insight in how immigrant mothers understand and perceive the risk connected to child immunization and how the information about the risk is explored and shared with the help of interactions with other immigrant mothers on social media. It contributes also to the knowledge about how social processes, like changes in traveling practices and mass refusals of vaccination, are perceived to influence societal safety, particularly, by increasing the risk of infections.

6.2 Implications

The findings of this project may be useful for representatives of Norwegian Child Welfare Service, Norwegian health care system, politicians and those who work with risk governance and risk communication. The revealed risk constructions provide with alternative understanding of the risks as socially constructed phenomena and gives more nuanced images of the risks as they are perceived by the participants. According to Renn (2009, p.3) this type of knowledge should be included in practical work with risk identification and management and in policymaking for solving risk-related problems.

The project has also several methodological implications for using social media in qualitative research on risk, risk perception and meaning construction. As it was demonstrated in this inquiry, social media as a research field has promising potential, because it provides researchers with unique access to observe and study online interactions in their natural context. Internet and communication via social media has become such an integrative part of human life in modern society, that internet research may be assumed as a form for naturalistic

inquiry which is easier to gain access to, than in the case of traditional “off-line” research. In this research project I studied a closed group on Facebook which characterizes with relatively stable social environment and continuity in interactions among its members. This stability may be specifically beneficial for inquiries which demand prolonged engagement in the field. In the case with this research project, my prolonged observations of the interactions among the participants provided me with important contextual information for the analysis of the chosen discussions.

Besides, social media provide researchers with multiple opportunities for designing diverse types of research and for combining several data collection and recruitment methods. In this research I combined several data collection methods, and due to my experience with conducting this project, I suggest that internet research is particularly suitable for flexible, loose types of research designs.

6.3 Further research

This research project was designed as an exploratory inquiry, and furthermore, was limited by time and resources. Therefore, it demonstrates a narrow fragment of evidence, and further research is demanded for investigation of how social media are used by lay people as a platform for sharing risk information and collective meaning construction about different types of risks. Other groups of immigrants as well as ethnic Norwegians should become target audience for further research. New inquiries are required to discover and study possible similarities and discrepancies in the use of social media by different immigrant groups and ethnic Norwegians for exchanging risk information and participating in collective meaning construction.

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Kristiane Lindland

4036 STAVANGER

Vår dato: 15.02.2018

Vår ref: 58567 / 3 / HJT

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

Tilråding fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 7-27

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 22.01.2018 for prosjektet:

58567	<i>Sosiale medier og risikopersepsjon.</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	<i>Universitetet i Stavanger, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
Daglig ansvarlig	<i>Kristiane Lindland</i>
Student	<i>Feodosiya Ermakova</i>

Vurdering

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er unntatt konsejnsplikt og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjektopplegget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

Vilkår for vår anbefaling

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:

- opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
- vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
- eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet

Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke [endringer](#) du må melde, samt endringskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet

Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i [Meldingsarkivet](#).

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt

Ved prosjektslutt 15.06.2018 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Appendix C. Table template for the analysis.

		Main branch of discussion		Secondary branch of discussion	Comments