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Title: Adaptation and Conformity-Immigrant parents’ reflections about parenting in Norway

Topic: ‘How do immigrant mothers experience parenting in relation to their perception of a Norwegian standard of parenting?’



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Abstract

Title: Adaptation and Conformity-Immigrant Parent's Reflections about Parenting in Norway

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Keywords: immigrant, Norway, 'doing parenting', barnevernet, acculturation

The main aim of this study was to discover how immigrant mothers experience parenting in relation to their perception of a Norwegian standard of 'doing parenting'. Taking the point of departure from an ethnic plural sample group, the study evoked an understanding of a culturally embedded parent and similar challenges faced in adapting to the Westernized ideal of parenting according to modern Norwegian values. Three research questions formed the skeletal frame around which the study would be structured. These questions sought to excavate the parents' understanding of a Nordic socialized childhood, a reflection on their acculturation process and a consideration as to how the Norwegian society promoted or discouraged parenting practices influenced by their respective cultural contexts.

The research was undertaken qualitatively with semi-structured interviews facilitating the data collection process. The sample group consisted of eight mothers, two each from Somalia, Tunisia, Poland and Nigeria who are currently residing in the Rogaland Kommune, Stavanger. A thematic narrative methodological hybrid was exploited as means of designing the data analytic tool. Employing foundational principles of the 'negotiation culture', individualistic/collectivistic and acculturation paradigms, a conceptual frame was developed to inform the interpretation of the main findings.

The results of the study indicate that the intercultural contact between immigrants and the Norwegian society is one laced with difficulties and ambiguities. The study has proven that irrespective of ethnic, religious or cultural differences, some elements of immigrant parenting are experienced similarly across minority groups; namely cultural shedding, specific child-rearing values, a need for the maintenance of cultural identity, intergenerational conflicts and sociocultural adaptation. The study has also indicated that there exists an intensively ambivalent relationship between the general immigrant population and the Barnevernet (CWS). The findings justified that this reality speaks to unawareness of the disparity between child protection versus child welfare on the part of the migrant community, while unawareness of cultural differences on the institution's part.

The study concludes that *cultural sensitivity* is an easy phrase to pronounce, but one that presents a paradoxical challenge in defining 'the best interest' for children who are at the heart of the policies and programs centered on parenting. Migrant parents might be of the view that parenting ought to be a personal matter. However, Norwegian path-dependent values of egalitarianism, 'sameness' and the pervasiveness of the CRC on issues of child development, challenges the ability of child protection stakeholders to negotiation a position of mutual understanding.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Researcher's Interest in the Topic

There are some 'taken-for-granted' truths about phenomena, people, traditions, existence are never questioned simply because we hear others saying it, we see others doing it, we are taught that this is how it is done, but we have not really taken the time out to explore why. Culture fits perfectly in this 'taken-for-granted' definition. It can be so diverse, yet so specific, so fluid yet so stagnant, so appreciated, yet so undervalued. When the specificities of our own difference cross the expanse of our bounds to meet those of another, this is the time they become more identifiable, challenged, altered or more appreciated. Parenting is one of those often times culturally specific phenomenon that journeys across geographical bounds and contextual peculiarity, adding to the montage of a diversely globalized world.

My interest in the subject of exploring how immigrant parents experience parenting in relation to their perception of a Norwegian standard of 'doing parenting' (Silva and Smart, 1999), was sparked by a discussion I had an ethnic minority parent of Nigerian origin which also motivated further ethnographic observation. This encounter brought to life the intriguing reality that when two worlds meet, there are a plethora of these 'taken-for-grantedness' within each individual sphere that need to be laid on the table, explained and understood in order to facilitate the coexistence of these two varying entities. Though parenting was the subject of discussion, the dad's concerns were directed mainly at the Child Welfare Services (CWS: Barnevernet), which, from his assessment, plays a pivotal role in the way that immigrant parenting is experienced in the Norwegian society. The discussion really left an impression.

Reminiscing, I could discern that there was some tension in his feelings towards the CWS. The explanation was that the institution had one primary agenda: "to take away people's children, especially immigrant children". It was his view that as immigrant parents, they felt as though they were 'walking on egg shells' and was afraid that barnevernet could walk in and take their children at any time. He substantiated his argument by hinting at several stories of immigrant families who had fallen 'victims' to the institution. Among his 'evidences', he made mention of two Nigerian and an India couple who all had their young children taken away without sufficient claim from the CWS. He was confident that immigrant families are 'targeted' on two grounds: firstly, 'they are sometimes considered incompetent parents in comparison to ethnic Norwegians and secondly, foster care was a huge money-making business in Norway and immigrant children were the preferred 'merchandize'. He was confident that these stories were representative of 'facts' about how CWS operates and not mere unfortunate and unique cases.

Could it be that these 'stories' were somehow exaggerated in the media and among immigrant groups? Is it really necessary for immigrants to be this critical of barnevernet? Are these 'egg shells' real or imagined by minority groups? Is Norway as 'culturally insensitive' towards immigrant parents as this father claims? This research seeks to investigate to the extent to which the above questions can be explored and offer some clarification as to how immigrant parenting is internalized in the Norwegian context.

1.2 Background to the Problem

Migration has become one of the fundamental machineries engineering our globalized world; and is a powerful force for change that cannot easily be controlled by governments (Castles, 1998). The amalgamation of its sturdy economic backbone and generous welfare state, makes Norway an attractive destination for those in search of improved life opportunities; particularly those with families. Migration is a relatively new phenomenon in Norway, but has spiraled since its take off in the 1970's. Eriksen (2013) postulates that alongside rapid growth of the nation's ethnic minority population, debates about integration, immigration policy, multiculturalism, and national identity have flourished in Norway in recent years. Interestingly, all the aforementioned issues that the host society is forced to grapple with, are also entangled in the lives of immigrants who endeavor to create a life of normalcy in a world of difference that can be chaotic-yet exciting, home- but far from it, stable-yet insecure. Irrespective of the ambivalence that comes along with adaptation to the new place, the people and their customs; countless number of people manage to break away from their basic support networks, and transplant their home base, their life projects and their dreams in this new place to be called home (Sluzki, 1979). The lives of immigrants are not 'transplanted' in a vacuum, but adding to their lives and families are their customs, traditions, cultures, ways of viewing the world, beliefs, ideas and the list continues. One author found it imperative to question: "If culture is such a powerful shaper of behavior, what happens to individuals, who have been developed in one cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new cultural context?" (Berry, 1997, p.6). Eriksen (1993) had a similar chain of thought when he asserted that "there is no clear evidence for the assumption that it is inherently problematic to 'live in two cultures', but such ambiguous situations can certainly be difficult to handle in an environment where one is expected to have a clear, delineated identity" (p. 138). In this regard, immigrants are then seen as anomalies, trying to find their place in the social classification of a new society. Parents in particular contribute substantively to this anomaly that immigrants add to the ethnic composition of their new home.

Parenting is considered a culturally engineered entity that is transmitted from generation to generation (Selin, 2014; Quinn, 2005; Thurer, 1994; Glenn, 1994; Phoenix, Woollett and Lloyd, 1991). Sluzki (1979) argues that:

Families, in their function as main socializing agents, convey not only the norms and mores of their culture at large, but also the specific styles, modes, values, and myths that constitute an ad hoc, family specific view of the world and of their own history (p. 385).

Immigration often involves varying degrees of social and cultural adjustments in the family's structure. The ideal of a good parent is deep rooted in values, customs and morals that differ across cultures. Likewise are the values that parent transmit to their children. It is argued that "in the process of immigration, parents are often confronted with totally different child-rearing practices and ideologies held by the socializing agents of the host culture" (Strier, 1996, p. 373). For this reason, a simultaneous process of learning the host country's 'how to' while unlearning undesirable aspects of individual cultural repertoire that may conflict with the dominant culture's way of parenting is required from immigrant parents in order to expedite 'fitting-in' with the new society. This is achieved through acculturation; "a dual process of cultural and psychological change that

take place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry, 2005; p.698).

Colored by their cultural way of ‘doing parenting’, adjusting to the preferred standards upheld by the Norwegian society often proves problematic for immigrant parents; as conflicts related to rules, meanings and values between immigrant cultures and the dominant culture are inevitable (Zapf, 1991). The clash between immigrant cultures and the Norwegian’s have impregnated immigrant groups with a rather ambivalent feeling towards the Norwegian Child Welfare Services (CWS). Resulting, the CWS has been under fire for their interventionist approach to immigrant families. The over-representation of immigrant children in out-of-home-care in the CWS has sparked several controversial debates recently. In fact, data from Statistics Norway explain the ambivalence: immigrant children are 2.6 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than their Norwegian counterparts (Kalve and Dyrhaug, 2011). An updated report declares that this statistic have remained relatively constant with ethnic minority children still having a 2.7% more chance of being placed in out-of-home-care in comparison to the ethnic majority. Children of Afghanistan, Somali, Iraqi and Vietnamese lineage are most prevalently placed (Dyrhaug and Sky, 2015). More recently, these statistics have also grown to include children from Polish, Eritrean and Russian lineage among the top minority groups to be subjected to such placements (ibid).

To this end, the tension between immigrant groups and the CWS have recently attracted the attention at both the local kommune and political levels. Results of a cross-country study conclude that “the government’s policies and platform that outline the Norwegian state’s handing of migrant children are controversial within the general public, and there are critical voices that demand stronger political action and standpoint in the case of migrant children” (Skiveness, Barn, Kriz and Toso, 2015, p.57). As the country’s ethnic composition intensifies, so does the need for knowledge in addressing the issues confronted with. In light of this, the researcher is interested in exploring the how immigrant parents conceive and experiencing parenting in this new environment, considering their cultural predisposition to approaching parenting; which might conflict with the dominant discourse and practice of parenting measured by a ‘Norwegian yardstick’.

1.3 The Research Question

Culture is the name for what people are interested in, their thoughts, their models, the books they read and the speeches they hear, their table-talk, gossip, controversies, historical sense and scientific training, the values they appreciate, the quality of life they admire. All communities have a culture. It is the climate of their civilization (Lippmann, 1963, p. 385)

Reflecting on Lippmann’s postulate in a migration context, one envisions a ‘cultured immigrant’ meeting a ‘cultured society’. In this case, culturally ingrained parents being greeted by a Norwegian society that has been fashioned by its own sociopolitical and cultural path dependencies. What happens when these two worlds meet? What are the expectations of both groups? What happens to the children at the center of this cross-cultural contact? It is with these ambiguities in mind that I seek to discover how immigrant mothers experience parenting with a perceived notion of Norwegian standards of doing; and to what extent cultural predisposition affects the adaptation process.

The primary research question seeks to ascertain: ‘how do immigrant mothers experience parenting in relation to their perception of a Norwegian standard of ‘doing parenting’? The supporting questions are as follows:

- How does the understanding of a ‘Nordic’ socialization of childhood coincides with or differs from parent’s traditional way of ‘doing’ parenting?
- How do parents cope with the acculturation process necessary for ‘learning’ and ‘unlearning’ parenting practices?
- What are parents’ views on how culturally sensitive the Norwegian system is in accommodating their parenting behaviors?

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The migrant population in Norway consists of individuals from varied cultural and sociopolitical history; relocating to a ‘Westernized’, modern, Norwegian society. The overall purpose of the study is to investigate how immigrant parents perceive and experience parenting in the backdrop of the dominant Norwegian culture. In fulfilling this aim, the process of acculturation will be examined in facilitating an understanding of how adaptation and conformity are achieved overtime. The specific objectives of research include:

- To have an understanding of how an individual’s cultural history influences their parenting habits.
- To explore the challenges faced by immigrant families in adapting to the expected way of ‘doing parenting’ according to Norwegian standards.
- To understand how do immigrant parents strike the balance between ‘doing parenting’ that is more identifiably ‘the Norwegian way’ versus the maintenance of their own culturally prescriptive style of parenting.

1.5 Purpose and Significance of the Study

We are living in an increasing global village where and people are drawn to resettle in foreign countries for various reasons. Irrespective of the economic downturn stifling many countries across the world, Norway has stood resolute in repelling the impact. Thus, the pull factors to the Norwegian shores are indeed being grabbed by many in search of finding better life opportunities. Currently, Norway’s homogenous cultural milieu is being increasingly augmented by a plethora of minority cultures. In order to meet the demands of a plural society, Norway is faced with the task of instituting policies regarding family and child welfare that are neutral in addressing the ethnic composition of the population. As a result, this research aims to add to the body of existing knowledge on the way forward in such policy creations. Of important interest are the socialization agencies such as the school and partnering institutions such as the CWS that share a personal relationship with immigrant families. The research promises to be an educational tool for social workers and other practitioners who cater to resolving intercultural family conflicts as the study aims to shed light on the sociocultural and psychological orientations of immigration as a phenomena. The researcher also hopes that immigrant families and ethnic minority group associations/schools might also be able to get a better understanding of ‘doing parenting’ according to Norwegian expectations. As studies conducted in a cross-cultural context have reiterated, acculturation is a reciprocal process. The ease at which it is accomplished is dependent on the

attitude of the ‘acculturating’ group as well as the host country’s (Berry, 1992, 1997, 2005, 2008; Sam and Berry, 2006).

1.6 Justification of Point of Departure

The Norwegian society is principled in the Nordic/Social Democratic welfare regime. The Nordic welfare model has at its core the principles of egalitarianism and universality (Esping-Andersen, 1990); immigrants are treated with no exception. In fact, research conducted by Kriz & Skivenes, (2010) confirmed in their findings that when intervening in immigrant families, CWS workers tend to neglect multi-cultural demands; enforcing instead broad universalistic approach to children’s welfare. The approach to this research epitomizes this emphasis on universality in that, the research aims to extend findings to the wider migrant population; instead of limiting the study exclusively to one ethnic minority group. In so doing, I intend to paint a broad picture of immigrant parents as a collective group, voicing their experience and perception of how they have internalized the reality of parenting in the context of immigration; and how the interface between their way of ‘doing parenting’ coincides with or diverts from the expectations of the Norwegian society. I want to hasten to point out that the study is in no way classifying the immigrant population as a homogeneous group; but instead seeks to explore similarities in the way that parenting is experienced across different ethnic groups within the Norwegian society. Compiling the perspectives of several ethnicities in contrast to a single group is more representative of how the phenomenon is realized, thus more applicable to influencing related policies/programs targeted at the ethnic minority population.

Important to mention also is the sample group selected to participate in the study. Even though the researcher could have opted to include fathers in the study, the sample population was limited to women. Scandinavia is often identified as the hallmark of equally gendered societies—a yardstick for measuring gender equality and an example for a modernized definition of fatherhood (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 2009; Kautto, 2010; Melby, Wetterberg, and Ravn, 2008). Despite the efforts to an actual realization of constructing gender equal societies, researches have repeatedly indicate that parenthood is incessantly gendered, as is portrayed in popular culture through television, magazines, commercials etc. (Luke, 1994; Francis Connolly, 2003; Crompton, Lewis, & Lyonette, 2007). According to Nentwich (2008), “although ‘new fathers’ do change diapers, the mother is very often seen as the ‘main parent’ (p. 207). More specific to the Scandinavian context, Nilsen, Brannen, and Lewis (2012) found that irrespective of institutional support available for parents, mothers are the ones who take full advantage of provisions such as parental leave and part-time work. While majority of fathers do take parental leave, mothers are left with most of the responsibilities as carers. Importantly, research has indicated the importance of ethnicity and gender when approaching issues on parenting in Scandinavia (Siim, 2008; Melby et al., 2008). Many ethnic minority groups, particularly from collectivistic culture, still hold firm to traditions where patriarchy, gendered division of labor and vertically structured relationships are the order of the day. In such family traditions, tending to the emotional needs of children is a task primarily undertaken by female figures. In light of the aforementioned facts, the researcher decided to design the study exclusive to female participants. My intention is in no way to endorse or perpetuate this ideal; however, issues such as time constraints, garnering in-depth insight and positionality were key considerations that propelled the decision.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter aims to consult some of the general reservoir of literature addressing the issues related to migrants, immigration and parenting. The main point of departure emphasizes the understanding of the subject from a cultural perspective, highlighting the nuances that underline the practice of ‘doing parenting’ in a new society. These associated with a socially constructed view of parenting is reviewed as well as specific information related to Norway’s immigration history and social specifications are also explored.

2.1 The Norwegian Context

Home of one of Europe’s most renowned oil and gas capitals-Stavanger, Norway has been trotting the path to upward economic affluence since the early 1970’s. Though relatively small in population, Norway stands tall among the economic giants of the world. In fact, it is often given esteemed titles such as one of the best countries in the world to live and raise a child. The country currently holds top measurement in Human Development Index, has one of the highest GDP per capita (UNDP, 2014); and has an unemployment rate of 3.7% (Statistics Norway, 2015). Like other Scandinavian countries, Norway employs a social democratic welfare state regime that is built on the principles of universality and “equality to the highest standards” (Esping-Andersen, 1990; 168).

2.1.1 Immigration History and Trajectory

Until the late 20th century, Norway was characterized as both an ethnically and culturally homogeneous country; a large exporter of people (Eriksen, 2013; Sam and Berry, 1995, Melby et al., 2008). Today however, migration trends are indicative of the fact that ethnic and cultural diversities are now greater than they have ever been (Andreassen, Dzamarija and Slaastad, 2013). Migration flows intensified after the combined results of the discovery of oil in the 1970’s and Norway’s inauguration to Schengen in 2001. Irrespective of its peripheral locale, Norway’s secured milieu, economic stability and generous welfare system dubs it an attractive destination for migrant scholars, workers or those in search of better life opportunities (Eriksen, 2013). Data published by Statistics Norway indicates that “at the beginning of 2014, there were 633 100 immigrants and 126 100 Norwegian-born to immigrant parents in Norway” (Statistics Norway, 2015). Official records show that Norway has attracted nationals from different regions of the world including Asia, Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Oceania. Publications issued by Eurostat indicates that Norway has seen significant population increase for the period 2008-2012; and that this trend is likely to continue due to the economic wealth the country enjoys (Eurostats, 2014).

According to Brochmann and Kjeldstadli (2008), “immigration may be divided according to several variables – such as the length and direction of the migration, the causes of migration or the type of state and attitudes in the receiving country” (p. 1). In this global era, people migrate for various reasons. This diversity is noticeable in the reasons accounting for migration tendencies in Norway. The primary reasons are labor, family reunification, refugee, education (Statistics Norway, 2014), love, conflict, poverty, adoption (Andreassen, Dzamarija & Slaastad, 2013). The movement of people to Norwegian shores have replaced the once homogenous population with a diversified ethnic, cultural and social milieu. Polish and Swedish immigrants are the most popular ethnic groups adding to the plural composition of the population; while other migrants from

Somalia, Pakistan, Lithuania, Afghanistan, the Philippines and other countries have also added to the growing population (Statistics Norway, 2014).

2.1.2 Attitudes toward Immigrants

Scholars reiterate that the attitude of the receiving population is a tremendous contributing factor towards the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of immigrants to their new environment (Berry, 1992; Berry and Kalin, 1995). The attitude towards immigrant survey confirms that there is a general positive attitude towards migrants in Norway. However, this is further varied according to background factors such as age, gender, region, education status etc. (Statistics Norway, 2013). An itemization of questions in the survey further explains the variation of attitude towards the immigrant population. For example, a majority of participants were in agreement with the statements *immigrants enrich the cultural life of Norway* and *immigrants should be given the same job opportunities as Norwegians* (86%). Presented with another scenario however, the statistics showed a one third of the respondents who agreed that *most immigrants abuse the welfare system* while a half disagreed. A similar percentage were of the view that *immigrants are a source of insecurity in society*. There was an almost equal percentage of respondents who were of the opinion that *immigrants in Norway should endeavor to become as similar to Norwegians as possible*, with 49 per cent agreeing and 41 per cent disagreeing (Statistics Norway, 2013). A number of research in the field of culture and immigration have recognized this attitude as an assimilationist preference to acculturating immigrants into a new society (e.g. Berry, Phinney, Sam and Vedder, 2006; Berry, 1997; Eriksen, 2013; Sam and Berry, 2006). For example, in controlling the influx of refugees and asylum seekers in the country, Norway has administered a ‘dispersal’ strategy to relieve the burden of over-crowdedness in Oslo, the country’s capital. Westlin (1993) commenting on this issue, argues that a strategy of this nature is “a means to promote assimilation to Norwegian society, which fits the preferred strategy of incorporation rather than integration” (p. 374). There are however several theses that are aimed at justifying the position that underscores Norwegian’s general immigration policies. Primarily, it has been proven that countries which have a longer migration history (such as the USA, Australia and Canada) are more likely to employ an integrationist profile to acculturation and immigrant policies in general than do countries such as Norway that are recently experiencing their debut into the world of cultural plurality (Berry et. al, 2006).

2.1.3 Embracing diversity: a by-product of immigration

Individuals are characteristically representative of the artistic mosaic that makes one culture distinguishable from another. Parts and parcels of an immigrant are ideas, cultural practices, traditions and religious customs. According to Noesjirwan and Freestone (1979) when people move to a new culture, “they take with them the taken-for-granted meaning and structure of their home culture. They continue to choose actions consistent with it, and to interpret their own and their host’s actions in terms of it” (p. 190). The dilemma between protecting a nation’s legacy—the cherished cultural retentions and shared values while at the same time making the decision to accommodate cultural differences, is one of the inevitabilities that come along with an appreciation for diversity (Strumia, 2013; Kymlicka, 2002). Host countries are then forced to grapple with a situation of compromise: how much differences should *we* be tolerant of? Why is it necessary to make these adjustments for *their* benefit? How threatening are these tolerances to our existing

cultural values? How will these changes be received by the both the majority and minority population? All these questions and more are left to be answered in circumspect of the national culture to which officials are obligated to protecting and preserving.

2.1.4 The Effects of Nation-building Exercise on Immigration Policies

Eriksen (2013) pointed out that in Norway, “it is true that in the 20th century, the project of national building and developing a welfare state entailed policies that aimed at creating a stable, homogenous national identity” (p. 14). However, with an influx of a diversified immigrant population, immigration navigators are now faced with the pressure of changing their course. Much of this challenge can be attributed to the fact that immigration is but a relatively new phenomenon in Norway. Adding to this argument is the understanding of the influence of the rootedness in national identity; in conjunction with ethnic homogeneity that pre-dates immigration activities. Supporting literature adds that majority of the discourse surrounding immigration in contemporary Norway is focused on the preservation of cultural identity, entangled in the historical development of the nation-state (Eriksen, 2012) cited in (Mahmoud, 2013). The complexity of this entanglement of state and national identity is further clarified by Eriksen (2013) who explains that:

The thrust of Norwegian policies towards immigrants have trended in the direction of equality, sometimes understood as assimilation. One reason may be that the same word, ‘likhet’, means both “similarity” and “equality” in Norwegian. In other words, no terminological distinction is made between equal rights and cultural similarity. Claiming equality, therefore, is an understandable and laudable thing to do in Norway, while claiming the right to difference is more difficult to handle ideologically. This is partly the result of the history of Norwegian nationalism; and partly an indirect outcome of the Labor-led construction of the welfare state, where equality has always been associated with cultural homogeneity (p. 7). The problem facing Norway and its national identity in this century is the fact that the country was founded on the premise of ethnic homogeneity (and a considerable degree of cultural homogeneity), while contemporary Norway displays increasing diversity. In other words, the old map does not fit the new territory (p.13).

It becomes obvious that the threat of an eroding national pride stands as a huge blockade to openness and acceptance of immigrants, especially in light of the fact Norway is a country that is considered to be inherently culturally homogeneous. As another author reflects, the current discourse on immigration in Norway is articulated in such a way that it “leads to a further rigidity of identities and construct of inside/outside, where ‘immigrants’ are perceived as a threat to the Norwegian nation and welfare state” (Mahmoud, 2013, p. 11). Another writer expresses that a nation-state model that proposes a principle of syncing *citizenship* with *cultural membership* poses grave difficulties in forming collective self-identification (Castles, 1998). Similarly to Eriksen’s arguments, Mahmoud (2013) reasons that the construction of national identity in Norway “came to foster a sense of belonging and rootedness that promoted an imagined sameness and required therefore the suppression of internal differences and the creation of border makings” (p. 151). This, she argues, has led to the discursive recognition of immigrants as ‘others’ even when integrational strategies are taken to ‘fit-in’. Eriksen believes that the antidote to this is the appreciation of diversity embraced in the philosophical practice of multiculturalism. He asserts that in order for national solidarity and cohesion to be achieved among the nation’s diverse inhabitants; among

other steps, it is imperative to “promote diversity within a framework of Norwegian values and ensuring representation of diversity” (Eriksen, 2013, p. 13). Offering an explanation for multiculturalism as an ideological approach to the issue of diversity, Baubock, (1996) states:

As a normative idea, multiculturalism assigns positive value to a plurality of cultures within a society, demands respect for cultural difference, refutes the possibility or desirability of a strict separation between private and public cultural practices, supports a policy of public recognition beyond mere tolerance, and rejects claims of (moral) superiority for specific cultural traditions as well as relations of domination, exploitation, and forced assimilation between cultural groups (p. 205).

In other words, multiculturalism offers a normative framework that policies aimed at addressing issues of cultural plurality can be drafted. Embedded in this ideology is the importance of equality in respecting cultural differences as a means of facilitating the coexistences of the melting pot. Kymlicka (2002) adds that multicultural evokes attitudes that embrace openness, diversity and pluralism; all products of globalization and modernization. According to Connolly (1991) an appreciation of diversity encourages the acceptance and “recognition of differences without being internally compelled to define them as otherness” (p. 48). Differences and ‘*otherness*’ are translated through mosaic of culturally retentive practices and traditions that migrants add to ethnic composition which describes contemporary Norway society. Parenting practices also add another dynamic to the classification of ‘*otherness*’ in the immigration discourse since parenting practices are said to be culturally defined, though not limited to.

2.1.5 Facilitating Social and Cultural Integration

Inevitably, immigrant parents will be entangled in a situation of ‘coexisting in two worlds’; since they are being inducted into a new society; but still have the lingering influences of their own culture which undoubtedly influences their parenting habits. Presented with this situation, government officials have the responsibility of addressing the diverse cultural contour created. Therefore, there are different agents and societal systems which must work hand-in-hand in addressing the ambiguities and inevitabilities that saturate the immigration context. (Bauböck et al., 1996) acknowledge that the task of dealing with culturally diverse societies is a challenging one for the host country. They propose a model that assists with assessing the complexities that receiving societies are greeted with. This model for understanding social and cultural integration, emphasizes the important internal dynamics that underline the way in which immigrants are received by modern western democracies. It suggests that the triadic linkage of state, family and market forms the bedrock of the attempt to homogenize a collective national culture.

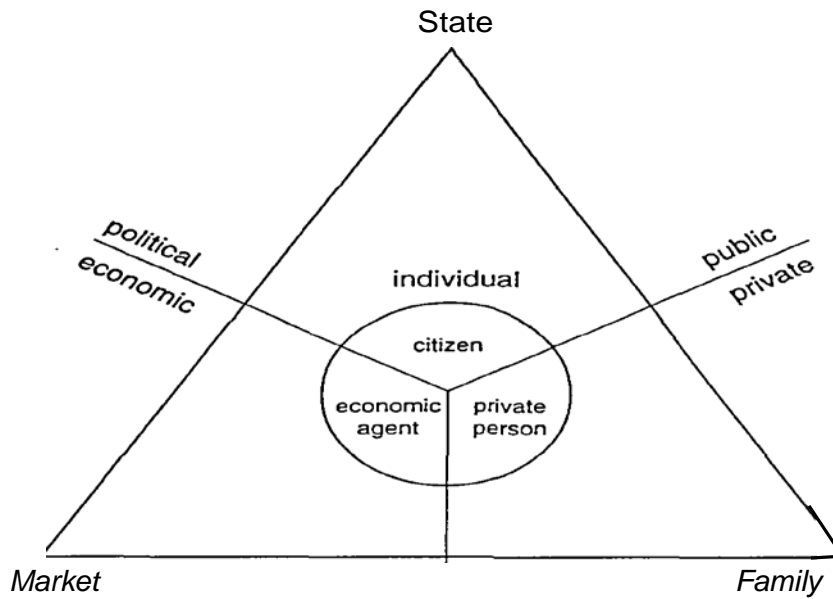


Figure 1: The civil society triangle: boundaries of spheres and roles of individuals. From (Baubock, et al., 1996)

A modified version of the civil society triangle model indicates the inextricable interplay between culture, state, market and the family, recognized as key factors to affecting the immigration process. The addition of culture to the civil society triangle produces what is termed a civil *society tetrahedron* (Figure 2) in which the varying cultural logics pull in different directions: the state produces standardization, the market produces diversification and the family produces particularization (p. 99). The family reproduces an inter-generational cultural milieu indicative of regional, class, ethnic and religious communities (p. 90) making up societies. The model highlights the complexity of adaptation not only on the part of the acculturating group, but also brings to the fore an insight into how the family constructs its cultural normalization; while the market reinforces a dominant cultural preference.

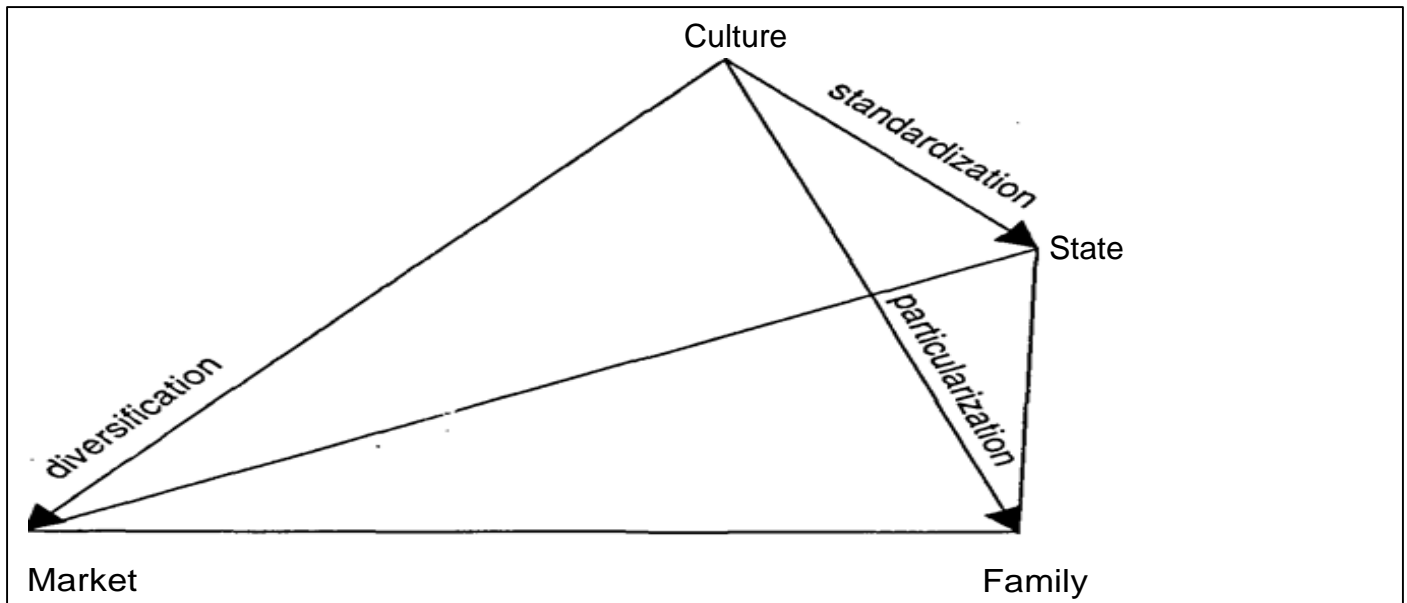


Figure 2: The civil society tetrahedron: cultural dynamics of the state, market and family. From (Baubock, et al 1996)

This is an interesting interpretation of the intricate web of relationships that exist in the immigration milieu and offers an understanding of how these relationships are formed, contained and maintained. It then challenges one to ponder on how the immigrant family fits into this equation in light of the belief that families are cultural vessels with an inculcated regimen for understanding the social world. Bourdieu (1986) envisions the family as a cultural courier- an entity facilitating transmission between generations by means of an ‘arrow effect’ transmitting the “cultural capital embodied in the whole family” (p. 23). Child rearing in general is a world of ambiguity and challenge. This can be even more conflictual when issues of immigration, acculturation, re-socialization and enculturation invade the parenting atmosphere. Undoubtedly, there will be the struggle of deciding what native cultural traits to impart to children, while adapting to the way of life in the new country of residence.

For the purpose of the study, closer attention will be paid to three facets of the civil society tetrahedron: state, family and culture and their significance to the understanding of parenting in the context of immigration. Since it has proven that there exists a symbiotic relationship between culture and family, the two will be examined contemporaneously while state will be taken addressed individually.

2.2 Culture/Family-a Social Construction of Parenthood?

Researchers are often intrigued by culture, its significance to one’s interpretation of the social world and in crafting ethnic identity and nationalism. It has been debated that culture is deeply woven into the fabric that knits a society together, influencing the organization of life and providing directives for the structure of human institutions. It goes beyond to implicitly influencing our feelings, thought processes and the internalization of social experiences (Gutierrez, 1973). This social constructivistic view of culture makes apparent the ideation that parenting practices are not exempted from the intertwined systems of values, morals, beliefs and symbols that engineer the contours of the cultural ensemble. Social construction refers to the process by which parenthood (mothering and fathering) is culturally defined within social, economic, and historical contexts (Apple and Golden, 1997). Another exemplar advocates that “in every community of child-rearers, a cultural solution to this task evolves” (Quinn, 2005, p.479). These cultural models vary considerably from one ‘child-rearing’ community to another.

2.2.1 Intergenerational Transmission within Families

One of the primary functions of the family is socialization-a channel through which learnt beliefs are handed down the family line. In earlier works on family research (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986), he understood this process as being achieved through ‘the arrow effect’. In more contemporary linguistics, the ‘arrow effect’, -a process by which parents influence their children, is translated into ‘intergenerational transmission’ (De Mol et al., 2013). Intergenerational transmission is defined as “processes of internalization in the family, whereby beliefs, values, and practices that were initially external to one family member become incorporated in another family member’s thoughts, feelings, and behavior” (p. 7).

Extensive studies have been done on the main parenting values which lay the foundation on which parenting and cultural values are transmitted across generations. On opposite ends of the spectrum are assertiveness and compliance (e.g. Baumrind 1971, 1991; Sam and Virta, 2003). The resulting

parenting style rooted in these bi-polars are authoritative and authoritarian respectively. Petersen, Steinmetz and Wilson (2008) postulate that “the dichotomy of authoritarian versus authoritative parenting differs by culture, ethnicity, social class and immigrant status” (p.1). Substantiating reports suggest that the latter is more evident in collective societies, while the former is more a product of Western societies (Lim et al., 2008). It is worth mentioning that a majority of migrants in Norway hail from these countries that are characterized as collectivistic-(such as Somalia, the Philippines, Afghanistan, Poland, Pakistan etc.). Kriz and Skivenes (2010), found that ethnic minority parents had a different perception of child-care needs and child-rearing approach in comparison to the native Norwegian parent; while Sherr et al. (2011) found that the preferred parenting styles employed by minority groups often conflict with the standard way of ‘doing parenting’ according to Norwegian expectations. A study of a similar nature purports that there are fundamental ‘deficits’ within immigrant communities in regards to the family, parenting and schooling (Dahlstedt, 2009). The previously taken-for-granted morals and values such as authoritarian fathers, obedient children and control over girls that are endorsed by some immigrant families, are highly discouraged in modern cultures such as Norway for example (ibid).

2.2.2 Parental Awareness across Cultures

In addition to parenting styles being a cultural production, investigation into the ‘level of parental awareness’ (Newberger, 1977) further developed by Cohen (2004), also indicates some element of socio-cultural dimension to parenting. The first level of parental awareness is identified as ‘egocentric’. As explained by Cohen “parents at this level understand their child primarily in terms of their own experiences, and their parental role is organized around their own needs and wishes” (p. 256). These parents tend not only to be more authoritarian; but also endeavor to exemplify the ‘social code’ of parenting. Parents in this category tend to be less sensitive to child participation, ignoring the views of children when making decisions regarding their wellbeing. For instance, these parents see leisure time, extra-curricular activities and social inclusion as a responsibility exclusively for parents to decide on. They often see the results of their children as direct representation of their capacity to be ‘good parents’. There is a thought that children’s success (or lack thereof) is representative of the greater capacities of the family unit. Grødem (2008) found that some immigrant parents in Norway have the tendency of ‘pushing’ children to attain their best capabilities as this is considered the safest means of social mobility for immigrant children.

The second level of parental awareness is described as the ‘conventional’ level. “Parents at this level understand their child in terms of rather stereotyped, external explanations and definitions provided by tradition, culture, or authority” (Cohen, 2004, p. 256). This level is also relevant to the understanding of parenting in an immigrant contextual framework. As ‘cultural preservers’, parents can either act as a facilitator to their children adapting to a new culture or they can take measures to inhibit this. The assumption can be made that conventional parents might be less opened to their children integrating into a new culture out of fear of cultural erosion or loss of ethnic identity. The fear of being disloyal to one’s ethnic identity might be further affected by the level of ethnic plurality of the neighborhoods in which immigrant parents reside. According to Valenta (2009) ethnic networks and neighborhoods can act as a safe haven for immigrants to protect valued lifestyles, identities, culture and self-respect (p. 176). This extent of conservatism however gives cultural groups the excuse to avoid participating in the dominant culture, which further elongates the adaptation process to the new environment. However, the greater the ethnic plurality, the more likely the chance that parents will break away from traditional solidarity.

The third level of parental awareness that Cohen described was the ‘child-centered’ level that nurtures an empowered, competent child. These parent’s approach to ‘doing parenting’ present a contrasted view to the way that ego-centric and conventional parents both position children in families and execute their parental authority. In comparison to the first two levels where the interest of the individual parent or ‘cultural fidelity’ take precedence over the children’s point of view; at this level, “parents perceive the parental role as the identification and fulfillment of their child’s specific needs” (ibid). Thus, children are given a more proactive role in shaping their own childhood and ideals in that their opinions are taken seriously by the adult. Listening to children and taking their thoughts in account are more expected from authoritative parents who are respectful of a child’s autonomy and right to participation. The Norwegian law and child protective system in general are considered ‘child-centric’ in nature (Križ and Skivenes, 2010a). According to James and Prout (2003) “the ideology of a child-centered society gives the ‘child’ and ‘the interest of the child’ a prominent place in the policy and practices of legal, welfare, medical and educational institution” (p. 1). Skivenes and Strandbu (2006) substantiate this position stating that “in many ways, the Norwegian law provides children with a strong position and an unambiguous right to participate” (p. 15). This position of authority and empowerment for children further manifests itself in families as the typical Norwegian style of parenting it considered as ‘an atmosphere of negotiation’ between parents and children (Sommer, Samuelssen and Hundeide, 2010). In other words, the ideal of a child-centeredness is a pervasive reality surrounding childhood and family discourse within the Norwegian and wider Scandinavian context.

The final level of parental awareness mentioned by Cohen was ‘rational-systematic’ level; characterized by a type of parental understanding where the child is understood as “a complex and changing psychological system and recognize that both parent and child grow through their respective roles in the parent–child relationship” (2004, p. 257). Parents at this level share a similar resemblance to the child-centric parent who does not feel threatened to nurture a confident, self-reliant child. There is a vested interest in developing the psychological competence of children, with them taking an active part in the process of growth negotiation.

2.2.3 Universalities in Parenting

An over-representation of research surrounding parenthood tends to relate parenting to cultural underpinnings. However, research have also been targeted at explaining universal characterization of parenting which are evident in all cultures and societies. A universalist position states that families are actually more similar than they are different; emphasizing that parenting everywhere is primarily concerned with love for children, discipline, nurturance and emphasizes some level of control (Falicov, 1995). Anthropologist Naomi Quinn (2005), has hinted at four main universal features of parenting explained as constancy, emotional arousal, evaluation and pre-dispositional priming. Even though these universalities are carried out differently in each cultural community, Quinn advocates that these key features of parenting withstand cultural and social differences as they form the core framework around which the process of socialization is achieved; and are closely related to each other.

Constancy has to do with the regularities and repetitions that children are taught. It is important to communicating cultural values from one generation to the next. Emotional arousal explains the imbued modes of emotional responses to different stimuli, in different situations. The third feature-

evaluation has to do with adults regulating children's behaviors into becoming the 'desired child' that parents envision. This effect is heightened by emotionally arousing techniques "such as beating, frightening, teasing, shaming, or praising" (p. 481). These techniques are used situationally, are often defined using global parameters. They are determinant of behaviors that are approved or disapproved and might be used to judge whether a child is loved or unloved. Predispositional priming engineers the child's responsiveness to socially expected and acceptable behaviors. Together, these mechanisms are sustained and reinvented to indicate to societies the ideal parenting behavior expected of them. This effort to observe universal patterns in parenting also alludes to the cultural embeddedness of individuals and they are all carried out very differently in each society.

2.3 The State

The Norwegian Social Democratic welfare state regime to a large extent, transcends its primary principles of universality and equality to the wider social construction of society (Esping-Andersen 1990, Kautto, 2010); the family being no exception. With this principle also at the heart of policies concerning children and families, the Norwegian child protection law has been characterized as 'culture blind' and color-blind (Kriz and Skivenes, 2010). The primary focus of not only the law but also child protection workers, is to ensure that all possible strategies are taken to adequately secure the care and protection of children. The aforementioned authors reiterated that "in Norway, the state has historically been more willing to intervene in family life on behalf of children by providing in-home services and especially by promoting equality of opportunity for children irrespective of their cultural background" (Kriz and Skivenes, 2010, p. 2648). The authors also pointed out the central importance of the welfare state's vested interest on 'sameness' (or similarity) of experience for children. This approach presents a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to family intervention and is less conscious of difference emanating in a pluralistic culture. The steadfast presence and importance of the welfare state and nation-state identity to the response of parenting obligations means that it is imperative all parents adapt to the these expectations for child-rearing habits.

2.3.1 Immigrant children in out-of-home-care

The issues of adaptation and acculturation affect every member of the immigrant family. Minority children are faced with several challenges in a new society, especially the challenge of 'fitting-in'. The over-representation of ethnic minority children in state care in the welfare system is an alarming tendency in many Western countries. Scandinavia has been witnessing a similar trend for the past few decades (Vinnerljung et al., 2008). In Sweden, Norway and Denmark, media and professionals have for several years debated the 'problem' of overrepresentation of immigrant children in out-of-home care (Skytte 2002) cited in (Vinnerljung 2008). The situation in Norway has attracted both local and even international attention. According to Demaerschalk (2013), in recent years, several cases of immigrant parents whose children were placed in out-of-home care by CWS caused protest and even diplomatic issues between Norway and the countries of origin of the immigrants. Reports indicate that there is a significant difference between the ethnic minority children placed in out-of-home care in comparison to the ethnic Norwegian cohort. The situation is explained by the statistics that point to the fact immigrant children are twice likely to be placed in alternative care than are ethnic Norwegian children. Furthermore, there is an even greater number of first-generations among this group (Kalve & Dyrhaug, 2011; Dyrhaug and Sky, 2015).

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

This chapter sheds light on the theoretical knowledge base that provided the relevant vantage point from which the research topic was approached. There are several theoretical frameworks that could aid in explaining the topic understudied. Thus, the frameworks that were chosen further advanced bracketing and contextualizing the research topic. They provided a focus on parenting in the context of immigration.

The theoretical collage selected provides a holistic view of the research topic. Based on the literature reviewed, the idea of individuals as cultural beings makes for an interesting inquiry into how the acculturative processes encountered on introduction to a new culture facilitates immigrant parents' adjusting their parenting behaviors to suit the cultural fabric of the new country. As Quinn (2005) reminds that our environments are profoundly cultured with patterns unequivocally directing behavior traits, assessing the research topic from a cultural logic seemed worthwhile. Specifically, much has been written about the collectivistic/individualistic cultural divide which I found relevant for understanding the research topic. Additionally, negotiation culture—a theoretical underpinning indicative of what can be considered the most profound parenting approach in Norway, complimented the other two frameworks from the basis of contextualization and providing practicality of 'doing parenting' from Norwegian eyes. Together, these theories design an intricate focus on the extent to which immigrant parents may be confronted with a task of re-socialization in order that their parenting approach might synchronize with that of the Norwegian society.

These theories were also motivated by the thought that there are similarities and differences across cultures. The frameworks used are in-tandem with the position that this research approaches the subject from a general perspective as compared to a more specific investigation into any one cultural group. Therefore, their versatility shows relevance for a generalized understanding of the subject, while at the same time highlighting relativity to selected cultural groups. The theories individually place different dimensions of the research topic under the microscope, lending a possible frame for compartmentalizing the research topic as well as understanding it in a broad contextual frame. Collectively, they indicate how the issue of immigrant parenting is intricately linked to other ecological facets of the wider society; through the different socializing agencies which the family inevitably comes into contact with. An encounter with differences and ambiguities underlines the acculturation experience. The theoretical underpinnings not only aim to magnify exactly where these differences are in both the host culture and immigrant cultures in issues affecting parents; but also to provide a rationale for understanding how this reality is experienced and understood by migrant parents.

3.1 Negotiation Culture: 'Norwegian Way of Doing Parenting'

A cultural shift has paved the way for contemporary parenting preferences practiced in Norway and Scandinavia at large (Dencik, 1989; Sommer, 1998, 2005; Gullestad, 1996; Sommer et al., 2010). The traditional authoritarian way of 'doing parenting'—a model built on hierarchical constructs which emphasizes obedience from children, has been replaced by a form that is considered a culture of negotiation. Concretizing this notion, Sommers et al. (2010) observe that

“it is not to be in concordance with “normality” if a Scandinavian father is a strict authoritarian, giving top-down orders to be obeyed by his child” as such a parent is viewed as “an adult not having any contact with the feelings and understandings of his child” (pp. 210-211). Cemented in the principle of the humanization ethos, ‘negotiation culture’ is an alternative to authoritarian-stricken relationships. In general, it nurtures the creation of equality enveloped in the regards for one’s opinion and interpersonal competencies, as opposed to the idealized inequality framed in social position, ranking, gender role or other undeserved dis/advantages upheld in authoritarian styled relationships (ibid). Thus, the negotiation culture implores families and the wider society to galvanize an environment in which children are seen, heard and their uniqueness and individuality valued, not taken for granted. An eloquent expression by Sommers et al. explains:

There is an underlying cultural understanding that a contemporary adult should be able to understand and empathize with children’s perspectives. Parents, educators, social workers, and researchers all operate under the current *ethos of humanization*...The negotiation culture that characterizes contemporary families and society is unfeasible unless the parties basically acknowledge each other as separate minds – individuals each holding personal perceptions and opinions that form the very basis for conversations and negotiations...The humanization and individualization processes paved the road for the understanding of children as citizens.... In this view, although young children do not match adults in terms of competence or experience they are still considered their *equals* (2010, pp. 13-14).

The diagram below illustrates the cornerstones on which negation culture is built:

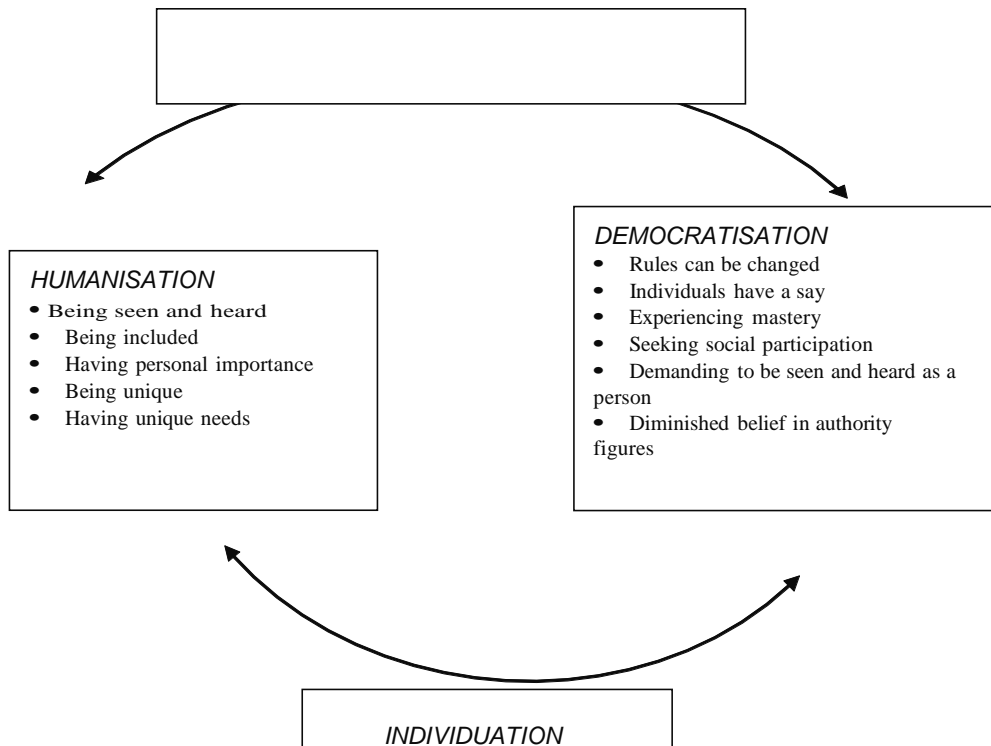


Figure 3: Negotiation relationships as pertinent Scandinavian democratic values. From (Sommer et al., 2010)

The diagram above depicts a Norwegian child who is not prohibited by social constructs in making his/her mark not only within the confines of his/her family; but also within the wider society. Sommers et al., (2010) pointed out that the humanization dimension of the paradigm was significantly motivated by the shift from an authoritarian regime which often saw children as victims of corporal punishment among other forms of abuse. According to Dencik, (1989) “modesty, presentability, propriety, obedience, to be seen and not heard, are not the ideal virtues emphasized today” (p.159). He continues to explain that hitting a child for example to command respect or taking other drastic measures to ensure discipline is a thing of the far past in the Scandinavian context. In fact, there is a zero-tolerance for corporal punishment and less harsh forms of disciplining is encouraged. Therefore, the humanization ethos which forms the foundation of the negotiation culture has seeped its way into various other layers of the Norwegian society.

3.1.1 A Rights-Based Approach-Considering the UN CRC

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has propelled a turning point for recognizing children’s perspective in contemporary societies. It has charged countries, policy makers, educational institutions, practitioners, researchers, parents with the responsibility of harnessing and exploiting the uniqueness in the voice of the child by listening to them, taking them seriously and allowing them participation rights. Scandinavia is regarded as a forerunner in responding to the call of the CRC in translating policies on child welfare and perspective into practicality (Sommers et al, 2010; Gilbert et al., 2011; Therborn, 1996). In Norway particularly, the rights-based approach has been at the center of child and family policy creation. Norway’s pioneering interest child social development has long history in the first Child Protection Act which was passed in 1896; and is said to be the first of such legislations in the world (Lurie and Tjelftaat, 2012). Likewise, Norway was one of the first countries to sign and ratify with the CRC which became effective in February 1991. The integrated forces of child-focused policies rooted in the principles of the CRC and a welfare state built on egalitarianism, Norway has instituted several avenues that complimentarily safeguard the best interest of children. The institutionalization of an official Ombudsman for children, the reformed child protection act of 1992 (Lurie and Tjelftaat, 2012), a ‘child-centric’ child protection system (Križ and Skivenes, 2010, 2011, 2012; Gilbert et al., 2011) the construction of child-friendly daycare and school curriculum (Sommers, et al., 2010; Skivenes and Strandbu, 2006) all attest to the fact that children are given esteemed consideration in democratic processes in Norway. Additionally, children as young as seven years are given the chance to participate in court proceedings regarding their wellbeing, however under the condition that their maturity level will be taken into account.

3.1.2 Democratization at the Pre-school Level

Child participation has no age limit when the subject of education is being discussed in the Norwegian context. The guidelines for early childhood education for example, place great emphasis on ensuring that preschoolers are given the opportunity to actively participate in and evaluate everyday school activities. The concept of ‘*the playing child, the learning child*’ is also emphasized on this educational level, giving children a chance to create their own meanings of the world, without the directives of an adult (Sommers et al., 2010). Such institutionalized ideals geared toward safeguarding the best interest of children, seek to ensure that these institutions (e.g. schools, CWS, daycare) are held mutually accountable to their respective functions. It is with such ‘eagle eyes’ that the child’s welfare and wellbeing are seen as responsibilities of not only the

family, but the society at large (Björk Eydal and Satka, 2006). Thus, there is a thin line between what is private family matters versus what ought to be relevant for public intervention.

3.1.3 Negotiation Culture Facilitating the Socialization of a ‘Competent Child’

The twentieth century has been dubbed “the century of the child” (Lurie and Tjelflaat, 2012). The idea of “the competent child often appears in present day discussions and descriptions of modern childhood in Norden” (Brembeck, Johansson and Kampmann, 2004, p. 7). This way of acknowledging children’s abilities and agency is a direct result of the interconnectivity between nation state and welfare state. The philosophies alluded to earlier, such as the humanization ethos, democratization, negotiation culture; a welfare state built on egalitarianism and principles of the CRC translated into hard laws are all amalgamated facets giving birth to this contemporary view of children in society. The concept of the competent child can be regarded as a by-product of the negotiation culture because it implores parents to acknowledge children’s equal rights, values and their ability to take responsibility for themselves (ibid, pp. 8-9).

The negotiating culture ideology has given the researcher the leverage to see parenting and child development peculiarities through the eyes of an ethnic Norwegian parent. It makes imaginable how parenting practices are construed, supported and carried out accordingly. Certainly, no one theory universally explains a social reality. However, the fact that Norway and Scandinavian in general is seen as a benchmark for other countries to emulate equitable child and family policies; gives the researcher confidence that this theoretical framework is reliably representative of how parenting standards are generally outlined in the Norwegian society. This paradigm also positions the child centrally in the family, instead of presenting parenting as a dichotomous entity.

3.2 Understanding the Collectivistic/Individualistic Cultural Perspective on Social Development

Social development is one of the pinnacles on which all societies are built. Fueled through the process of socialization, it is unquestionable that cultural rudiments will be transmitted during this process. Culture is thus an essential mechanism crafting its design and instructing the various socializing agents. A predominant conceptualization of the relationship shared between culture and social development is the postulation that cultures exist in two dichotomous states; that is characteristically individualistic or collectivistic (Killen and Wainryb, 2000; Kagitcibasi, 2005, Healy, 2007). The primary concern of the Individualistic-Collectivistic (I-C) paradigm is to ascertain the precedence given to individual versus group goals in the interest of the maintaining group cohesiveness. In other words, this school of thought focuses chiefly on the self-other relationship measured on a scale of separateness versus embeddedness (Kagitcibasi, 1997). Individualism is said to be a product of the cultural ethos of the Western world, while collectivistic attitudes are indicative of the dominant cultural description of non-Western regions.

Generally speaking, cultures that emulate an individualistic orientation reflects fundamental principles of independence, self-reliance, individuality and autonomy. In contrast, cultures of a collectivistic nature showcase principles of group cohesion, austerity, interdependence and heteronomy (Kagitcibasi, 2005). Figure four below offers a graphical representation of how the ‘self’ is defined in either societies. It contrasts a focus on separateness versus embeddedness in the self-other relation. Figure 4^a illustrates an independent, autonomous self; indicative of an

individual who is “the owner of his or her own motivation” (Sommers, 1998, pg. 316). The interdependent self, displayed in figure 4^b on the other hand, portrays permeable social relationship knitted and strengthened by the ties with other relations within one’s social system.

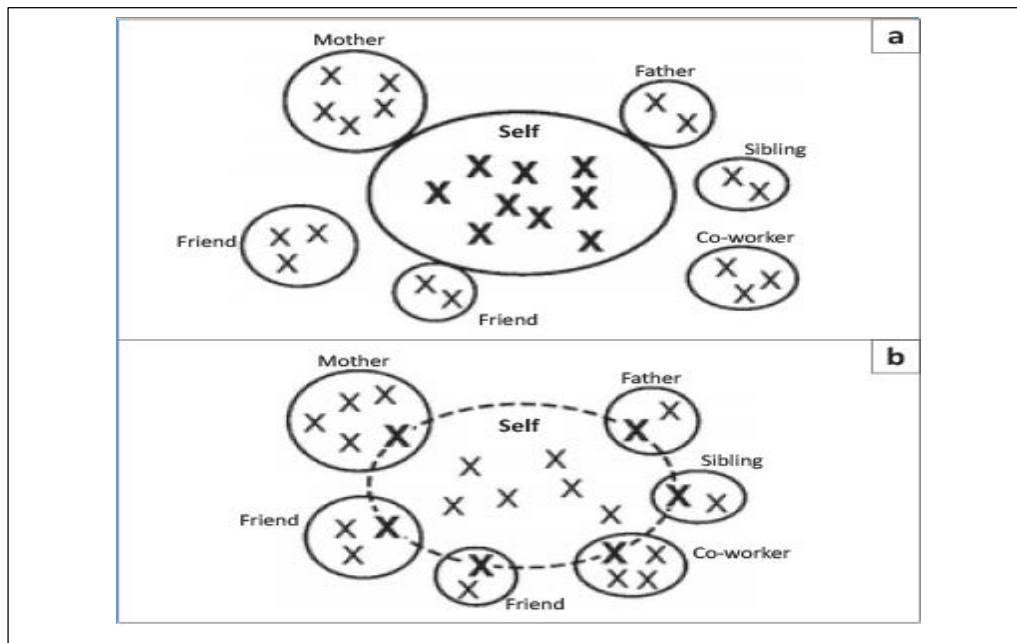


Figure 4: The self-other relation in two cultures. From (Sommer, 1998)

Several studies indicate the transference of the individualism-collectivism ideal into parenting rubrics (e.g. Sommer et al., 2010; Kagiticibasi, 2005; Omi, 2012; Killen and Wainryb, 2000; Rothbaum et al., 2000; Oyserman et al., 2002; Hart, 2008; Burman, 1994). Specifically, (Kagiticibasi, 2005; Triandis, McCusker and Hui, 1990) have found that qualities such as independence and autonomy are cherished values nurtured in children of so-called individualistic societies; while observations of obedience orientation instilled in children raised in the cultures described as collectivistic. Results have also shown that ethnic migrants in Western societies often raise their children with these collectivistic principles such as interdependence and heteronomy in contrast to the independent and self-sufficient characteristics which underline the way that children from the West are brought up.

3.2.1 A New Vantage Point?

Traditionally, I-C theorists presented the individualistic-collectivistic discourse as two dichotomous extremes to cultural construction. However, recent theorization have suggested that even though cultural groups tend to prioritize on the expression of collectiveness in comparison to a preference of individuality; it is worthwhile that researchers instead view the two distinctions as coexisting and continuous ends of one pole of measuring cultural patterning (e.g. Killen and Wainryb, 2000; Kagaticibasi, 2005). The proposition to re-conceptualize the assessment of the I-C paradigm rests on the assertion that “people are always grey-never black or white” (Singelis et al., 1995, p. 243). In essence, the unidimensional construct of the paradigm does not sufficiently explain the vast uniqueness of cultural repertoire.

Different researchers have taken varied approaches to expound on the construction of cultural imperatives along a continuum or as coexisting patterns of culture. For instance, Kagaticibasi (2005) explains how the interplay of autonomy and relatedness underlie the construction of the self in the context of a family environment. The author proposes a multi-dimensional model incorporating the two polarizing dimensions of the self; developed accordingly to the societal and familial contexts. It is found that parenting has the capacity to instill both autonomy and relatedness and not necessarily one or the other. A similar study executed by Singelis et al (1995) identifies a scale for measuring I-C extremes. The authors recommend a measuring rod for which to gauge horizontal and vertical collectivism and individualism. Vertical collectivism includes seeing one's self as part of a community and accepting the (hierarchical) inequalities existing therein; while horizontal collectivism emphasizes both equality and the individual self. On the other hand, horizontal individualism is indicative of the ideal of an autonomous individual with an indwelling respect for equality; contrary to vertical individualism which fosters the conception of autonomy while at the same time accepting inequality. Killen and Wainryb (2000) sought to the prevailing tendencies of viewing individualism-collectivism as dichotomous polar by presenting research findings indicating "ways in which individualistic concerns with independence and collectivistic concerns with interdependence coexist in Western and non-Western cultures" (p. 7).

When selecting this paradigm as a frame for understanding and exploring the research topic, I considered the cultural logics influencing the parenting habits that parents selectively adopt in raising their children. There is no doubt that different individuals have different styles of parenting, justified with the explanation that 'this is what I know'. This paradigm offers on one hand a microscopic lens to seek out some of these justifications, and on the other a magnifying lens through which to interpret and understand the historical and societal stimuli penetrating the diverse styles and patterns created in parenting; linking the influence of socialization to social development. The theory is also suggestive of Norway's general positionality on the subject of parenting ideals. In so doing, illustrating the distance in-between Norwegian parenting morale and different cultural groups, depending on their respective country of origin.

3.3 Acculturation Theory

In a broad sense, acculturation provides an understanding for the processes involved in the initial and continued contact between migrants and host societies. It is understood as the meeting of cultures and the anticipated change that results thereafter (Sam & Berry, 2006). The authors also point out issues of contact, reciprocal influence and change that form the building blocks of acculturation. The reciprocal component of acculturation means that it is a dual process effecting both psychological and cultural changes on micro, mezzo and macro levels. Sociocultural exchanges are the main trade-offs at the mezzo and macro levels while the individual level involves changes in a person's behavioral repertoire (Berry, 2005). Even though acculturation is said to be bi-directional in principle, it tends to induce more change on the acculturating group in actuality. On this note, immigrants are confronted with two very crucially pressing dimensions of acculturation: maintenance of their original cultural identity on one hand and contact with other groups in the resettlement country on the other (Sam and Berry, 1995, 2006; Ward and Kennedy, 1994; Berry, 1997). Simultaneously considered, these two dimensions generate four possible acculturative strategies within acculturative groups and the host country. They are referred to differently depending on whether acculturative processes are being considered by either groups.

3.3.1 Acculturative Strategies

Elaborating on these strategies, the works of Berry and colleagues have presented the following. From the perspective of the acculturating groups, when there is little interest in retaining one's original cultural identity coupled with an indulgence in cultural alternatives, *assimilation* is achieved. On the contrary, avoidance of other cultural groups while clinging solely one's original culture results in *separation*. The outcome of seeking to equally value interactions with other cultures and at the same time maintaining one's original culture is *integration*. Berry and others believe that integration is the most favorable acculturative strategy as it results in less acculturative stress among the acculturating group and is indicative of an acceptance of cultural diversity within the host country (e.g. Berry, 1997, 2005; Ward and Kennedy, 1993,1994; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999). In contrast, *marginalization* is defined when one has no interest of neither indulging in the dominant cultural nor seeking to retain their own original culture.

Looking at acculturation when enforced or constrained by the dominant group, the terminologies used are as follows: melting pot, multiculturalism segregation and exclusion. When separation is forced by the dominant society, then the situation results in segregation. Likewise, a *melting pot* is described when assimilation is enforced by the host country. Marginalization is a by-product of forced assimilation (pressure cooker), of which *exclusion* is a possible outcome. Similar circumstances lead to *segregation-resistance* towards cultural plurality. On another note, integration when endorsed by an opened, inclusive dominant group, leads to an appreciation for *multiculturalism*. In support of Berry's position, Parekh (2002) postulates that multiculturalism embodies the interplay of three interrelated perceptions, "namely the cultural embeddedness of human being, the inescapability and desirability of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, and the internal plurality of each culture" (p. 338). Berry's acculturation processes help to further clarify that the immigration experience might vary considerably from one individual to another, depending on the social context as well as the acculturative strategy that is personally selected by immigrants or are imposed by the society to facilitate induction into the new culture. One's openness to accommodating a new culture also has strong bearings on their adaptation process as this theory seeks to highlight.

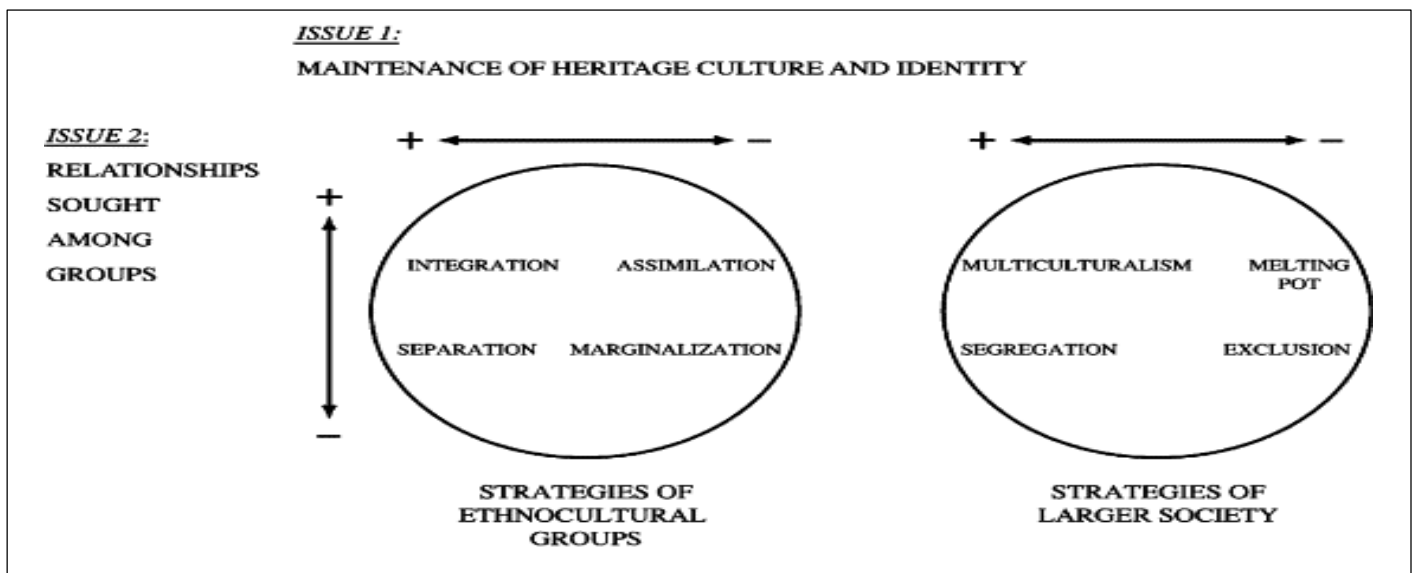


Figure 5: Intercultural strategies in ethno-cultural groups and the larger society. From (Berry, 2008)

3.3.2 Cultural Learning

There are several imperative features of acculturation that serve to compound the understanding of just how multifaceted and difficult this process can be for immigrants. The first to consider is “behavioral shift” which requires some level of “cultural shedding” (Berry, 1997; Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Actually a cultural learning initiative, this shift in behavior is necessary so that immigrants may shape their behavioral repertoire in order to appropriately reflect that of the new context (Berry, 1997). Language, religion, traditional values and beliefs are possible exemplars that might bear some weight on this issue. Again, cultural shedding is not experienced the same across ethnic groups due to the extent of cultural differences between the two or more cultures in contact. It is closely linked to two other matters-cultural identity which explains an individual’s willingness to let go off some of their cultural characteristics to embrace another and cultural distance which exemplifies how much work an individual needs to ‘put in’ in order to be more similar to a new culture.

3.3.3 Ethnic Identity

One author was very thorough when explaining the concept:

Human beings are culturally embedded in the sense that they grow up and live within a culturally structured world, organize their lives and social relations in terms of its system of meanings and significance, and place considerable value on their cultural identity (Parekh, 2002, p. 336).

Liebkind (1992) elaborates further stating that ethnic identity “is generally seen as embracing various aspects, including self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, a sense of shared values, and attitudes towards one’s own ethnic group” (p. 78). In acculturating, one’s ethnic identity evokes a dilemma between indulgence and withdrawal. Questions of cultural erosion versus solidarity are the hands drawn in this game of cards.

3.3.4 Cultural Distance

The dissimilarity between the cultures in contact stands at the heart of the acculturating process. Cultural distance as it is more popularly termed, implies the length at which immigrants must stretch to meet up to being indistinguishable from the natives. Berry (1997) points out that “the greater the cultural differences, the less positive the adaptation” (p. 23). The frustrations encountered then are certain and may result in negative acculturative strategies such as separation and marginalization on the part of the acculturating group and exclusion or segregation on the part of the host country.

3.3.5 Adaptation

The question as to how well do people acculturate is answered through the definition of adaptation. It can be discussed from a psychological as well as a sociocultural vantage point. The latter refers to “how successfully the individual acquires the appropriate sociocultural skills for living effectively in the new sociocultural milieu” (Sam and Berry, 2010, p. 478). There are several benchmarks for measuring adaptation. Differences can be drawn from inter as well as intra acculturating individuals. That is within one’s own ethnic populous, among others acculturating groups, and also the wider native population. In so doing, the issue of cultural distance might come

into focus on this subject. Berry (1997) points out that the most variable factor to consider is the level of difficulty faced by each individual or group in achieving adaptation. Despite these variations in factors leading to acculturation, one of the conclusions that has been reached is that the basic process of adaptation appears to be common to all these groups (Sam and Berry, 2006).

I am confident that the aforementioned issues involved in the acculturative process somehow impacts on the ease at which migrant parents can adapt to the Norwegian society. Although adaptation is said to be eventual, when one pays close attention to the ethnic origins of immigrants, it might paint a clearer picture as to why parenting is practiced the way it is and to somehow justify the pace of adaptation. The amount of cultural shedding necessary so that parents can identify with native parents undoubtedly impacts on their efforts to attempt adaptation. Resulting, issues such as marginalization, separation and exclusion are left to be questioned.

From the theoretical frameworks presented, I can discern that the acculturative process for immigrants will vary significantly because of issues related to, but not exclusive to cultural distance, ethnic identity, willingness/openness to adapt to a new environment, how children are perceived and 'positioned' in families. The culture of negotiation that underlines Norwegian parenting model forms somewhat a 'benchmark' for which immigrants of respective cultural backgrounds (individualistic vs collectivistic) must live up to. This paves the way for the 'distance' immigrant parents unavoidably have to walk to exude parenting repertoire synonymous to those expected with a culture of negotiation.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter aims to explain the methodological framework around which the study was developed. It starts with a justification of the epistemological position and research technique which underpin the study. The research design consisting of data collection instrument, sampling and participants recruitment procedures are further discussed. This chapter also provides an account of how the collected data is compartmentalized and presented. The chapter concludes with a description of some of the ethical issues encountered as well as a reflection on the overall research process.

4.1 Research Approach

The researcher's primary aim is to capture the understanding of immigrant parents regarding their experience of parenting measured with a yardstick of 'Norwegian standards'. The main research question interrogates: 'how do immigrant mothers experience parenting in relation to their perception of Norwegian parenting standards?' The nature of the researcher's enquiry requires a qualitative research approach since the aim to the study is to solicit the respondent's experience of a phenomena and the meanings attached to such an experience. A qualitative research design seeks to facilitate the researcher having an understanding of the 'reality' of those who experience them (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). This approach to the understanding of the meaning people ascribe to particular experiences is known as phenomenology.

4.1.1 Phenomenology

According to Castree, Kitchin and Rogers (2013) if a 'phenomenon' is something that manifests in human experience, then phenomenology allows for the studying of how people structure the experiences of their social world. This study seeks to ascertain an understanding the experience of parenting in the context of immigration. Thus, the interest is to find out what is it like to be an immigrant parent in Norway; evoking the juxtaposition of participant's way of 'doing parenting' with a real or imagined perception of a Norwegian standard of parenting. The reality of the practice of parenting is overwhelmingly diverse. Therefore, the researcher aspires to understand how these realities are construed and executed by participants. Getting an adequate understanding of how people interpret different experiences requires that the researcher positions him or herself at a vantage point that allows for an access to 'rich', meaningful data that expresses how people have internalized the experiences of their social world. Marx (2008) writes that though it is impossible to entirely understand the complete scope of a phenomenon, "the qualitative researcher seeks to understand what is being investigated as deeply as possible and to situate it within the context of time and space rather than in isolation" (p. 795).

The phenomenological logic to qualitative studies informs an interpretive approach to exploring a phenomenon. Interpretive methodologies are rooted in the principle of critical imagining, captured best through the mind's eyes of those who can recount a lived reality of an experience (Denzin, 2001; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). This position suggests some imperatives to keenly observe when undertaking a research; from deconstructing the phenomenon to contextualizing it (Denzin, 2001). Importantly, Husserl (1962) coined the term bracketing (epoche) which is an essential step taken by the researcher in dissecting, defining and critically analyzing the phenomenon, without imposing any presupposed biases. This is done inter-subjectively, from a neutral position. In an attempt to achieve this, the researcher sought to critically analyze the phenomenon in a fashion

that would be of relevance to both the immigrant population in Norway and the general population; especially those authorizing policies/programs with a focus on families and children. A significant body of literature reviewed presented a contentious interplay of cultural identity and the acculturative process with which immigrants are unavoidably inducted. Resulting, it was justifiable to contextualize parenting from a Norwegian ideal, with the consideration of an expectation from immigrants to mirror such epitomes, irrespective of the discursive reasoning of cultural influences on parenting behaviors. Theoretical frameworks were arrived at on the basis that they offered critical lens through which to further bracket, contextualize and approach analysis of the subject.

4.1.2 Qualitative Interviews

Interviews provide a convenient platform for the researcher to collect ‘rich data’ regarding the detailed actuality of parenting in an immigration context, in comparison to other instruments or quantitative methodologies. Interviews facilitates the production of knowledge that is “contextual, linguistic, narrative and pragmatic” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 19). Rich data is partly accounted for by ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973; Seal, 2007) within the qualitative school. According to Marx, (2008) “thick description seeks to present and explore the multifaceted complexities of the situation being studied, the intentions and motivations of the actors involved, and the context of the situation” (p. 795). As Denzin elaborates: it offers “deep, dense, detailed accounts” (2001, p. 98) of an experience in comparison to the taken-for-granted meanings that people tend to have of phenomena. The researcher is however conscious that gathering thick data should not in respect be validating the researcher’s preconceived assumptions, but instead to gain insight into the reality of another (Munhall 1994). In my opinion, ‘thick description’ opens the window for others to vicariously access the lived experiences of research subjects, which is the essence of what I intend for the study to produce.

4.1.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviewing has a wide variety of forms and a multiplicity of uses (Fontana and Fray, 1994, p. 361). However, of particular interest to this study is semi-structured interviews. As explained by Longhurst (2009), semi-structured interviews are verbal exchanges between an interviewer and an interviewee where the format of the interaction unfolds in a conversational manner (p. 580). The characteristic feature of this specific type of interview design is that allows both for the interviewee to “share their meanings, perceptions, definitions of situations and constructs of reality” (Punch, 2005, pg. 168). Also, participants are given the opportunity to explore the issues that they see fit to share without feeling obliged to divulge information that they would rather withhold; unlike structured interviews where “respondents are discouraged from deviating from questions” (Longhurst, 2009, p. 580). This offers the interviewee an opportunity of power in that they feel comfortable enough to share significant details without feeling pressured to do so. This is of particular importance to the researcher who values a true representation of how immigrant mothers perceive that they experience the practice of parenting in Norway.

4.1.4 Advantages of Interviewing

Interviewing is one of the most popular data collection method employed by qualitative researchers because of its ability to capture contextual and pragmatic views of the world (Atkinson, 2005).

Qualitative researchers have found it interesting to highlight the power dynamics that exist in the interviewer/interviewee relationship (eg. Hessi-Biber and Leavy, 2011; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Fraser, 2009). Hessi-Biber and Leavy (2011) illustrate that respondents are allowed “some latitude and freedom to talk about what is of interests or importance to them; allowing the conversation to flow more naturally” (p. 102) in semi-structured interviewing. Actually, an interview might be a rare and enriching experience for research subjects who get the chance at being ‘experts’ in the construction of knowledge, achieved through the esteemed value of their understanding of their social world. According to Kvale (2007), “it is probably not a very common experience in everyday life that another shows an interest in, is sensitive towards, and seeks to understand as well as possible one's own experiences and views on a topic” (p. 16). Irrespective, he cautions that researches should observe the asymmetry of power. Important is acknowledging that the interviewer/interviewee interaction is not as a mere casual encounter; but as a highly valued, “specific professional conversation” (p. 16) “where the researcher sets the stage for the interview and controls the sequence” (p. 22). Others argue that the issue of empowerment through interviewing can be contemplated as a two-edged sword, as even though participants are given the chance to contribute to knowledge production, their insights are used primarily for the benefit of the study (e.g. Longhurst, 2009; Kvale, 2007).

A fundamental advantage of semi-structured interviewing is that it permits a candid and conversational dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). It is not as inflexible as others such as structured interviews or closed questionnaires. Instead, it allows the researcher to probe inferences made by the interviewee that might be of relevance to the study, but would have otherwise been ignored by other methods. As Longhurst (2009) reiterates, the researcher does not rigidly follow the pre-prepared questions, but instead trails the navigated direction of the angle from which the interviewee interprets and responds to questions. This offers some leverage for spontaneity and fluidity for the researcher to discover diverse dimensions of a phenomenon that is not influenced a priori. This extemporaneousness that interviewing facilitates, results in authentic, unrehearsed and genuine accounts of situations as respondents’ immediate responses cannot be withdrawn or replaced (Gochros, 2005; Silverman, 2011).

4.2 Participant Recruitment and Selection

With the idea of an employed twenty-first century mother, much has been said about the revolutionizing of families in contemporary societies. Even though the traditional male-breadwinner model has been replaced by a dual-earner model, the increasing presence of women in the labor market does not nullify the fact that women have a greater task when responsibilities of child care and domesticated activities are divided in the family. Nentwich (2008) found that the normative binary construct of parenthood is still very vivid as women are the ones shouldering a greater part of parenting responsibilities, whereas the involvement of fathers in actual ‘parenting’ remains quite limited. Even as trendsetters in idolizing gender equal societies, Scandinavian countries has not escaped this reality. It is on this premise that the sample group was selected to being exclusive to mothers. Additionally, it is within this contextualized principle of universality underlining Norwegian nationalism that the researcher has decided to select a sample of eight mothers from four different ethnic groups. The primary aim of this approach is to understand

irrespective of cultural/ethnic difference, how the general immigrant parent population perceive and experience parenting in the back-drop of an imagined Norwegian way of 'doing parent'.

4.2.1 Profile of Participants

The research sample included a total of eight mothers two-each from Nigeria, Poland, Tunisia and Somali. Among this pool of participants, the Polish and Somali are representative of the largest immigrant group in Norway and the second largest group of 'Norwegian-born to immigrant parents' respectively (Statistics Norway, 2015). This is a good contrast to the other two groups of participants who represent just a minute percentage of immigrants to Norway. The sample also differs along religious lines-Somali and Tunisia representative of the Muslim population while the other two are predominantly Christian worshippers. These women also varied according to social-economic status, vocation and age. The qualification composition included a waitress, a nurse, a doctor, three house-wives, a secretary and a miljøarbeider (environment worker/therapist). The plurality in social economic status is a pivotal consideration as one's economic situation might prove influential on their parenting behavior.

4.2.2 Criteria for Participation

- Prospective informants should have been living in Norway for a minimum of six years and had two or more children. Six years is a reasonable time to expect that one would become acquainted with their new environment. Regardless, studies indicate that there are a multiplicity of factors affecting the pace of in integration into a new culture (Berry, 1992, 1997, 2005; Berry & Kalin, 1995; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). The participants selected had between two and twelve children and had been living in Norway for up to over twenty years.
- English is the researcher's mother tongue, thus the criteria that respondents should be able to speak and understand English. However, due to the difficulties finding respondents who had a good command of the English language, two of the interviews required transcription assistance-one in its entirety and the other only minimal support was necessary as the participant had a relatively good grasp of the language.
- The final criterion was that respondents should not have a history with the child welfare services as this might somehow skew both their perception and experience of parenting all together.

4.3 Data Collection

As indicated previously, semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate interview type for the data collection process. This method offers both the interviewer and interviewee the time and space delve thoroughly into experiences, opinions or understanding of a phenomena, resulting in production of dense and meaningful insight about the subject (Denzin, 2001; Longhurst, 2009; Kvale, 2007; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011; Punch, 2005).

4.3.1 The Interview Guide

After deciding on the interview type, it was imperative to construct an interview guide to serve as a 'map' to be used in conducting the interviews. Having read thorough on the research topic,

Longhurst (2009) suggests that it is advisable for the researcher to equip him/herself with possible scaffolding themes that direct the skeletal framework of the interview. Weiss (1994) refers to these themes as a 'substantive frame' around which issues of interest for further exploration will be developed. The researcher drafted the interview guide using three primary thematic topics which laid the foundation for the 'line of enquiry' or 'domain of enquiry' (ibid, p. 48) that the interviews would follow. These themes were devised on the basis that they canvassed the auxiliary research questions with the intention of deconstructing the primary research question. Seven appropriate probing questions were developed in relation to respective themes.

4.3.2 Snowball Sampling Technique

The diverse composition of the sample group demanded a different recruitment trajectory for each ethnic group. Primarily, snowball sampling technique was used as a means of contacting participants. As stated by Dattalo (2008) "snowball sampling is used to identify participants when appropriate candidates for study are difficult to locate" (p. 6). Being a sojourner, the researcher did not have primary access to a reservoir of network from which to access informants; thus, the recruitment process was a rather long and tedious stage of the project.

Contact with the Polish participants was made through a Polish language teacher who was a presenter at a conference which the researcher had attended. Through her networking, the two participants who fit the criteria for participation were identified. The Nigerian mothers were reached through a church congregation which the researcher had visited on several occasions. Finding participant who fit the criteria for participation was almost effortless with this group. Contacting both the Tunisian and Somali participants proved significantly more challenging especially in regards to the issue of language differences. Contact with the Tunisian community was aided by a faculty representative who had relations with the community. Her liaison helped with identifying the two participants who were very interested in the subject topic. Access to the Somali community was rather adventurous. The researcher made several attempts at identifying respondents but language barrier stood as the most persistent challenge to entry along with the reality that prospective participants might require the permission of their husbands in order to participate. Interestingly, the researcher met many 'dead-ends' even after promises were made for assistance to be offered. Even though they were quite illusive with their promises, the help of a taxi-driver eventually aided contact with one informant who was able to identify a friend who also suited the criteria for participation.

4.3.2 The Interview Process

Successful interviewing involves the interviewee feeling comfortable and competent enough in the interaction to "talk back" (Blumers, 1969, pg. 22) cited in (Silverman, 2011, p. 138). With this fact in mind, the researcher commenced with introducing the study-its motivation and objectives, adequately explaining the consent form and issues of ethical consideration. The researcher also took this opportunity to have the participants introduce themselves, ceasing the chance to ask the demographic questions outlined in the interview guide. This tactical approach was taken so as to create a comfortable environment for participants to feel safe and free to discuss prior to the more thought-provoking questions that were to follow.

The open-ended questions used, elicited explorative and descriptive responses which provided in-depth explanations that often resulted in certain 'markers' that necessitated further probes by the

interviewer. Weiss (1994) highlights that a marker is “a passing reference made by the respondent to an important event or feeling state” (p. 77). Hesse-Biber and Leavy affirm that markers are very crucial pieces that add meaningful scope and substance to the research. While the researcher was observant of these markers, efforts were made not to interrupt the informant; but to seek inquiry after the informant had concluded their point. This probing technique was necessary to either seek clarity on a point or to develop markers hinted at by the respondents. This was also quite helpful as a means of informing the interviewer whether it was necessary to reformulate or simplify certain questions in the guide as well as restricting the questions in such a way that it facilitated more fluid discussions. In the words of Rubin and Rubin (2005) “the questions you put on your protocol (guide) are not cast in concrete and are often changed as you learn of new, important matters about which you now want to ask all your other interviewees” (p. 145).

Interviews were conducted with eight eligible respondents who had consented to taking part in the study. Four of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the informants, two at the informant’s place of work and the remaining two in the library. The discussions lasted on average for one and a half hours. Dialogues were captured using a recording device, supported by field notes which served for the purpose of documenting pertinent points/markers raised by the participants. Due to the level of attentiveness that is required for a successful interview, the researcher prioritized on only jotting a few salient points. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) supports this decision stating that: “field notes are always selective: it is not possible to capture everything. And there is a trade-off between breadth of focus and detail” (pg. 142). Since all the respondents had permitted that the interview be recorded, detailed note-taking was not a necessity.

4.4 Data Analysis

4.4.1 Data Transcription Process

As previously mentioned, interviews were audio recorded; thus transcription was the starting ground to the explication of the collected data. Explained simply by Bernard and Ryan: “The first step in systematic analysis is the conversion of audio into digital text” (2010, p. 48). The responses were transcribed verbatim so as to keep the ‘detailedness’ of the discussions intact. Bryman (2012) advises that it is a worthwhile consideration that the written text reproduces word for word what the participants said (p. 485). In an effort to enhance the readability of the written text, obvious accents and involuntary sounds such as ‘um’, ‘yah’, and ‘uh-huh’ were omitted from the final compilation. Davidson (2009) agrees that such denaturalized transcriptions improves coherence and makes the text easy to read. While involuntary sounds were omitted, socio-cultural characteristics such as repetition, rhetoric and statements of emphasis were maintained as they add volume to what respondents sought to express. Prior to transcription, identifiable details of participants were coded in order to ensure anonymity. During the actual transcription process, any names or identifiable references that were made during the dialogues were also anonymized. Where clarification was necessary, informants were contacted to provide same.

4.4.2 Data Analytic Tool

An accurate assertion by Bryman states that “transcription yields a vast amount of paper, which you will wade through when analyzing the data” (2012, p. 484). Finding an analytic path through the ‘thicket of prose’ presents the researcher with a cumbersome and mammoth task (ibid, p. 565). Approaching the data analysis question initially, thematic analysis seemed an attractive analytical

method. However, upon coding the data, the realization that most respondents sought to engage dialogues in the form of a narrative made it apparent that this technique on its own would not do sufficient justice to the analysis since it left salient explanations fragmented into thematic labels. Resulting, the researcher contemplated a thematic narrative analysis instead as this would keep stories intact, while at the same time highlighting specificities, commonalities and differences in the data set. Reissman (1993) recounts a similar struggle with having to disintegrate several “long accounts that had coherence and sequence, defying easy categorization” (p. vi) which motivated idea of her now vast corpus of work in narrative analytic technique. Endorsing such analytical hybrids, (Floersch, et al., 2010) articulate that “concatenating analytic technique is possible and it produces a multidimensional understanding of the object of study” (p. 408).

Several scholars argue even though thematic analysis is one of the most frequently used data analytical approaches, it is one of the most flexible as there are very few systematic outlines on how to approach this method (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2012; Shukla, Wilson and Bobby, 2014; Floersch et. al, 2010). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 79). The flexibility of this method enables both surface (descriptive) and in-depth (interpretative) analysis of data (ibid, p. 78). Riessman (2008) ostentatiously describes a narrative as an individual’s account of an event or experience. Similarly, Ryan (2007) cited in Floersch et al. (2010) laments that narrative is about conflicts, interpersonal relations, human experience and the temporality of existence. She added that “it is when a text or ‘story’ contains these elements that they are considered narrative, not just a chronology of events. The specific analytical vantage point employed in this study is adopted from Reissman (2008) which focuses on the content of “the told-what is said” rather than “how the narrative is spoken” (p. 54). The flexibility and interpretive advantage in the unison of these two methods allow for an enriching representation of how parents experience the practice of parenting in an immigration context and how they give meaning to such experiences. Considering the strengths in their individuality, “the different features of the approaches mean that thematic analysis is better suited than narrative analysis to providing broad overview of a dataset, while narrative approaches allow an extended focus on particularities, including particular cases” (Shukla, Wilson and Bobby, 2014, p. 5).

A profoundly complimentary feature of both narrative and thematic analyses is that they are doorways/windows into people’s realities. They depart particularly on their technical mechanisms where narratives seek to focus on temporality, linguistic structure and sequencing of storied experiences of single cases; whilst thematic analysis presents generalized patterns across cases (Floersch et. al, 2010). The two however converge on other features including epistemological underpinnings. That is, they are both susceptible to being explicated using constructivism or realism/essentialism paradigms. The latter denotes a straightforward view of meaning of the data analyzed in comparison to the former perspective that lends a more interpretive lens through which to view experiences and meaning to being socially produced and reproduced (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thus, the constructionist perspective goes a bit further than simply repeating what was said; but in addition, “seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided” (ibid, p. 85).

Similar approaches can be employed to the identification of themes in the data set. One can decide on one of two levels-the semantic or latent (Boyatzis, 1998). In contrast to the semantic level where

themes explicitly represent the surface meaning of the data; the latent approach delves deeper with the use of other interpretive and theoretic apparatuses (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This research focuses primarily on the latent level in discussing relevant findings but will rely on the semantics tool in identifying and coding themes. While there were over-arching questions that guided the data collection and coding processes, themes were identified inductively from the material. In so doing, the researcher did not seek to influence thematic patterns with preconceived ideation, but instead allowed the data to ‘speak for itself’; allowing themes to naturally emerge from the data.

4.4.3 Data Coding and Theme Selection (Six-steps method)

Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend a six steps guide to doing thematic analysis which the researcher found useful to exploit in this study. During these phases, the researcher had opportunity to simultaneously identify potential narratives based on thematic categorization with-in and across cases. The steps are explained as following:

- i. Getting familiarized with the data. This starts with transcribing the data and entails an iterative process of reading, re-reading and noting initial ideas.
- ii. Generating initial codes across the entire data set by collating relevant categorical patterns to each code that surfaces.
- iii. Searching for candidate themes. In this phase, the previously identified codes are now collated into developing possible thematic groupings. Integral to this stage is a procedure referred to as “cutting and sorting” which involves identifying quotes that appear relevant to the named theme (Bernard and Ryan, 2010, p. 63). This can be aided by the use of a ‘thematic map’ of analysis which helps the researcher to construct a graphical representation of themes and can be further refined as the steps progress (see appendix). While doing this, the researcher can sort through narratives that are representative of the identified themes.
- iv. Renaming of themes. Candidate themes are now further defined and during this process, some themes were broken down, merged or omitted as the case required.
- v. The penultimate step allows for themes to be further refined and defined according to preliminary patterns recognized. Braun and Clarke more explicitly explains this step as “identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is, and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (p. 92). Concurrently, the researcher has the responsibility of seeing how “the narrative focus on the particular case supported development of the thematic analysis from a semantic to a more interpretative level... and examining the ways in which narratives and themes interact within and across cases (Shukla, Wilson and Bobby, 2014, p. 11).
- vi. The final step is producing a report. Ultimately, five themes were decided: dealing with issues of cultural clashes, learning/unlearning: sociocultural adaptation, ‘living in two worlds’-striking a cultural balance, ambivalence towards CWS and lastly, dealing with issues of cultural distances. These themes will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

“Because the main objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 372). Some general ethical research obligations relevant to be considered in this research are issues of confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent. Bryman illustrates that social research undertaken should ensure integrity, quality and transparency enhanced by evidence of the consideration of ethical issues (2012, pg. 146).

4.5.1 NSD Approval

The Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) is the “Data Protection Official for Research for all the Norwegian universities” (NSD, 2015) with the responsibility of regulating and approving research ideas. The primary conditionality for ethical clearance outlined is that “if you, through interviews, questionnaires, observations or other means, are gathering, registering, processing or storing information about individuals (i.e. personal data), then your project is likely to be subject to notification” (NSD, 2015). Since the research undertaken fit the aforementioned conditions, obtaining ethical clearance was a certainty. Approval for the research proposal was granted by the official in January, 2015, *-reference number 41358* (see appendix). Adherence to the guidelines outlined by NSD as well as general research ethics serve to improve the research integrity and credibility. As stated by Punch (2005) acknowledging such evokes reflexivity in the researcher to consider the manner in which the conducted researcher meets the set standards.

4.5.2 Consent

Clearly noted by Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) is that “people must consent to being researched in an unconstrained way, making their decision on the basis of comprehensive and accurate information about it; and that they should be free to withdraw at any time” (p. 210). Thus drafting an informed consent was an unquestionable initiative for a project of this nature (see appendix). In addition to signing the consent form, the particulars of the research were also verbally explained to each participant prior to the start of the interview. The researcher also made it clear to participants that their involvement was entirely voluntary, hence withdrawal at any time would be uncontested.

4.5.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

This principle was respected in the study by virtue of omitting the real names of respondents as well as the names of their children (for those who made direct reference to their names during the interview). Even though the ethnicity of the respondent will be disclosed during the discussion of the data, efforts will be taken to ensure that anonymity is achieved. O’Leary (2004) postulates that “anonymity goes a step beyond confidentiality and refers to protection against identification from even the researcher” (p. 54). To this end, an interview code (number) name was assigned to each transcribed interview and a code name to each respondent. Therefore, while the ethnicity of the respondent was recurrently mentioned, the actually interviewee was anonymized. Thus, there is no detail in the final research that would make the interviewee identifiable by their ethnic communities or readers in general. To ensure optimal privacy of the respondents, audio recordings were destroyed subsequent to being transcribed and the written texts were stored on a personal computer secured with username and password and accessible only by the researcher. Additionally, the transcribed data was disclosed only to research supervisor.

4.6 Reflection on the Research Process

In respect to the interpretive nature of this research, it is imperative to highlight some of the reflexive processes undertaken during the course of the study. In so doing, the researcher will report on some of the issues faced whilst conducting the study and how these matters were dealt with. As explained by Longhurst (2009) reflexivity in research encourages a “critical and conscious introspection and analytical scrutiny of one’s self as a researcher” (p. 580). This facilitates the researcher’s ability to gain new and genuine insight into the research.

4.6.1 Participant Recruitment and Language Barrier

A considerable challenge posed to the researcher was recruiting informants to participate in the interview. Contact with an ethnic community was a repetitive process due to the ethnic plural nature of the study. Even after contact was made with an ethnic community, this challenge was even more intensified when the recruiting criteria were mentioned. Language stood as the primary communication barrier in addition to willingness to participate in the study. Apparently, the research topic appeared a bit more sensitive to the participants than the researcher had anticipated; more so for the Somali community. Irrespective of the fact that language barrier was the underlined challenge of focus generally, within the Somali community this was compounded by the realization that prospective participants might need the permission of their husbands in order to participate. Even though this was not the case for the two participants who took part in the study, it did account somewhat for the delayed contact with participants since men were actually the gatekeepers that were initially approached by the researcher. This reality sparked a greater understanding of social and cultural codes that may inhibit a research objective. In qualitative linguistics, this process of gaining access can often times be frustrating and demotivating. However, the antidote to dealing with this insider/outsider phenomenon is through relentless pursuit of the target subjects (Bryman, 2012; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

4.6.2 Translation Process

There are several other issues that arose from having to deal with the language barrier. English language is a second language for all, save two participants. Resulting, the researcher had to constantly rehearse simplifying the questions in such a way that did not necessarily change the meaning and solicited the same responses from all participants. However, prior experiences were used to inform how the adjustment can be made smoothly. Important to point out, is how significantly different was the volume of information shared by those respondents who had a good command of the English language versus those who had a fairly good mastery. This was particularly evident in the interviews that required translation assistance. O’Leary (2004) narrates that the issue of translation is one of considerable importance in the collecting credible data. Thus, hiring professional translators is often recommended as these individuals usually have the expertise to assure that quality data is collected. However, as a student, hiring a professional translator was a far-fetched reality since this service is exorbitantly expensive in Stavanger. Thus the researcher had to rely on the assistance of an associate who fluently speaks and understands both Norwegian and English. In order to ensure optimal credibility and formality of the data, the interview guide was first completely translated to Norwegian, then we held a mock interview so that the assistant would have an opportunity to develop the confidence in paraphrasing and seeking for clarity etc. The assistant has had prior experience in translation but was not a professional per se.

4.6.3 Reliability and Validity

Using two representatives from each ethnic group serves to achieve triangulation as well as to enhance the reliability and validity of the study in general. The objective of triangulation is to increase confidence in the research findings through the confirmation of multiple sources according to (Heale & Forbes 2013, p.98). Additionally, consulting several sources heightens the possibility of ascertaining the dense, detailed reality of participants that the research is interested in exploring. Silverman (2011) informs that efforts toward attaining validity and reliability are concrete activities which are achieved based on the type of data collected. He also highlights that imperatives such as objectivity and credibility of the research are intensified by the means taken to ensure validity and reliability. In this case, the researcher sees it as a valuable option to increase the credibility of the study through the use of this triangulatory approach.

A fundamental component of qualitative research that often sees scholars grappling intensely, is the ability of data to be susceptible to several interpretive strategies (Bryman, 2012; Silverman, 2011; Norman and Denzin, 2000). The researcher was indeed cognizant of this especially during the data analysis process where it was most pronounced. Like other social scientists (e.g. Bryman, 2012; O’Leary, 2004), the researcher was also concerned with issues of credibility, replicability and reliability of the study. Therefore, the researcher took genuine efforts to ensure that authenticity and accuracy were key characteristics of the information presented. Steps were taken during the interviewing process to ensure that questions were communicated in a similar fashion to all respondents despite efforts to simplify some questions.

Denzin (2001) suggests that qualitative researchers utilizing an interpretive approach, should consider the hermeneutic circle “by placing the researcher and the subject in the center of the research process” (p. 74). This gives the researcher the opportunity to see the world through the mind’s eyes of participants and vice versa. What is implied then is a double hermeneutic circle which serves to enhance authentic interpretations. The researcher endorses O’Leary (2004) position that steps, in addition to trustworthiness ought to be respected in qualitative researches since the ultimate goal is to influence knowledge and policy production. Thus, he charges researchers with the responsibility to “get it right, to make it credible, and to approach it with rigor and integrity” (p. 12). Hence, the interpretive tools used by the researcher were reflective of reproducing authentic information which genuinely expresses the point of views of respondents.

4.6.4 An ‘Insider/Outsider’ Position?

The insider/outsider phenomenon has been an incredible consideration in qualitative research (especially ethnographic studies) (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). I am making the assumption that my positionality as ‘immigrant’ in Norway, might have been somehow influential on the participant’s willingness to divulge their genuine feelings regarding immigrant parenting. I could imagine that, was this study conducted by an ethnic Norwegian, respondents might have been more self-conscious or selective with the ‘detailedness’ of their responses. On the other hand, an ethnic Norwegian’s mastery of the Norwegian language could have been an advantage to soliciting ‘richer data’ since the respondents were more fluent in the Norwegian language. Therefore, I could be on either side: insider or outsider, depending on one’s vantage point.

4.7 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitation of the study is that it was excluding to the fathers in the family. Although it might have been worthwhile to hear the views of fathers regarding this subject, I do not think that the research results would be significantly affected, only balanced. I was more confident in my approach due to the fact that other researchers such as (Sherr et al, 2011) have also been futile in the attempt at trying to extend their study to male participants.

Another limitation to consider is that if this research was focused on a case study of one ethnic minority group, it would allow for greater definition of cultural distances and specificities about the group. Though this approach might not adequately highlight particular discrepancies faced by each community, there is some worth in acknowledging the ‘universalities in our differences’ in a growing plural society. Besides, findings might be more generalizable using this approach.

Summary

This chapter focused primarily on the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of the study. It has shown that a qualitative approach, employing inductive features, grounded in a phenomenological perspective served as a skeletal framework for approaching the search topic. This approach was most suitable for undertaking the subject topic since it provides an apparatus that recognizes the significance of participant’s lived experiences and how an understanding of those experiences form their reality.

Gathering data with a thick descriptive component was made possible through the methodological tenets of semi-structured interviews which served as the data-collection instrument. Data analysis was conducted through a multi-dimensional thematic narrative device. Five main themes common among the participants were extracted from the data set. Key issues of trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and transferability resonated with the researcher all throughout the research process.

Chapter Five: Research Findings and Analysis

The essence of this study was to elucidate how the immigrant population as a collective experiences the practice of parenting framed in the Norwegian context. This chapter organizes the main findings, indicating how they can be analyzed to show the experiences that underscore immigrant parenting. After a thorough assessment of the data collected and aided by a thematic narrative analytical tool, five primary themes emerged. Even though those primary themes form the groundwork for analysis, other subthemes might be relied on to heighten an interpretive frame that more aptly contextualize and explains the anchored themes.

I had previously presented a demographic profile of the respondents, so the following table serves the purpose of reintroducing them.

Name/Code	Country of Origin	Religion	Current Occupation	No. of Years in Norway
Amira	Tunisia	Muslim	House Wife	16
Ayana	Somalia	Muslim	House Wife	15
Califa	Somalia	Muslim	Miljøarbeider	18
Emna	Tunisia	Muslim	House Wife	25
Kemi	Nigeria	Christian	Medical Doctor	7
Natalia	Poland	Christian	Waitress	6
Rose	Nigeria	Christian	Nurse	19
Wiktorja	Poland	Christian	Secretary	12

Firstly, I should highlight that there were a few ‘ethnic specific’ that were not reported. Though these revelations might be of significance to understanding immigrant parenting within specific acculturating communities, I will focus on the findings that were more generalizable. That is thematic patterns which frequently occurred throughout the data set since the aim of the study is to point out the similarities in immigrants’ experience of parenting in Norway, irrespective of ethnic or cultural differences. The five substantive themes that were recurrent across ethnic/cultural lines are:

- ✓ *Dealing with issues of cultural clashes*
- ✓ *Learning/unlearning: Sociocultural adaptation*
- ✓ *‘Living in two worlds’-striking a cultural balance*
- ✓ *Ambivalence towards CWS*
- ✓ *Working through cultural gaps*

5.1 Theme 1: Dealing with Issues of Cultural Clashes

Strier (1996) postulates that immigrant parents are usually greeted with parenting ideals in the host society that differ significantly from what they typically familiar with. Most of those differences are grounded in cultural specificities that informs the 'ideal child' that parents seemingly desire. Studies indicate that parents of immigrant background are likely to experience 'tension and conflicts' while attempting to transfer habits to the new society (Sluzki, 1979; Dahlstedt, 2009). Hundeide et al. (2011) found this fact to be evident within Norwegian immigrant communities, concluding that immigrant parenting is not necessarily identical to the way that ethnic Norwegians go about doing parenting. Predominantly, parenting in Norway is said to resemble that of a 'culture of negotiation' that creates an environment for equity in the status of both 'parent' and 'child'. Such an approach to parenting relinquishes structural and social barriers, providing children with the leverage to be 'present' and proactive in family life (Sommers et al., 2010, Gullestad, 1996; Sommers 1998). This study has found that immigrant parents, irrespective of ethnicity, were faced with situations of cultural clashes in several respects:

5.1.1 The 'free' Norwegian child

In her narrative, mother of three, Wiktorina, explains her understanding of 'Norwegian parenting' and compares how this conflicts with the relationships with her children:

I see Norwegian parenting model as a liberal style parenting; by that I mean children are given a lot of freedom to do what they want, they have no obligation and from my observation, very little rules. I think in Poland, it is more an authoritarian style parenting. That mean that we try to let children know that other people are also important, they have rights but because they have experience. We try to explain to our children their place in the family...We say also, you have rights, but you also have obligations. I very often try to compare what kind of family model is used here in Norway, I observe the main difference is the place that children hold in families, compared to Polish families. I know that children are important to Norwegian families but they are given too much freedom. For us in my country, freedom is gained according to age, there is more as they get older. I think here in Norway, children have a lot of freedom from start, almost. Sometimes I even think that children even have more authority than their parents, more power than parents do. I don't know, maybe it is just my opinion but I have other Polish friends, Russians and Italian friends and they also think the same thing!...In Norway, parents don't have power but in my opinion parents need to have power over their child but on the other hand, the child needs to understand why...When my Polish friends and I observe the level of freedom that Norwegian children have, we sometimes think that we are over-protective; but we think only when we are in Norway. In the same time and place, but in Poland, we never come to the conclusion that we are over-protective to our children-no, we feel normal! (Wiktorina)

Like Wiktorina, others parents had a similar point of view:

...I think the difference is that there's too much freedom. It's ok to have freedom, to have that ability to choose but some Norwegian parents tend to go too much. (Califa)

It is very difficult to try to parent the Norwegian way because I can't agree with children having no rules or boundaries... They don't have some rules. The kids do what they want

and they don't do anything at home... In my head I'm thinking, if children are just sitting around at home, why shouldn't they help out with some chores? Parents come home from work, they cook, they clean, they do everything. (Natalia)

I assume that the 'freedom' to which the mothers refer is best understood through the linguistic of an 'autonomous child' which authors such as (Kagaticibasi, 2005) and (Sommer et al., 2010) refer. The former author focuses on the intensity of the self-other relationship within relational ties across cultures while the latter authors highlight a culture of negotiation which underlines parenting ideal in Scandinavian societies. It is based on recognizing the inviolable self: necessary for promoting children's autonomy and independence within families. Such autonomy facilitates what Cohen (2004) identifies as the third level of parental awareness described as the 'child-centered' level that nurtures an empowered, competent child. The concept of a 'competent child' epitomizes a robust, autonomous, capable, responsible child; contrasting significantly to the idea of children as vulnerable, incompetent, obedient 'adults-in-the-making' (Brembeck et al., 2004; James and Prout, 2003; Lansdown, 1997). As explained by Cohen, parents at this level perceive the child as a unique individual who can be understood via the intimate parent-child relationship rather than through external definitions. The idea of child autonomy is rooted in the structural composition of the Norwegian society, reiterated through law, the welfare state, child pedagogy, the political arena and in the classroom (Brembeck et al., 2004; Skivenes and Strandbu, 2006).

The ideal of a 'competent child' is enshrined in almost every crevice and corner of the Norwegian society. The presence of the child can be felt not only within the confines of the family; but as far as to the political sphere. On the familial level, conjugal relationships fosters the possibility for the child to be seen as a complete being who is on equal par with the adults (Stefansen and Aarseth, 2011). On the community and political levels, according to Lurie and Tjelflaat (2012) there are programs allowing children the opportunity to take part in conflict arbitration exercises in their schools and communities and political councils for children to participate at both the communal and national levels. Several authors have noted that not all cultures endorse this way of viewing children and parenting all together and that this reality is most noticeable among ethnic minority groups in the population (e.g. Sommers et al., 2010; Hundeide et al., 2011; Bak and Von Brömssen 2010). Accepting the idea of a competent child requires that parents unreservedly trust children with the responsibility to share in decision making and without fear of them being incapable to devise their future. However the insecurity inhibiting some migrant parents is the issue of over-protectiveness. As Wiktorina introspected on the subject, she reached the conclusion that "...we sometimes think that we are overprotective". She then added the idea that this may be measured on a continuum where as she would not regard herself as an overprotective mom in the Polish context. Her reasoning suggests that Norway is far more advanced in giving children a degree of leeway that immigrant parents are more restrictive in doing.

Norway's focus on child-centeredness is understood by Wiktorina as "...sometimes I even think that children even have more authority than their parents, more power than parents do". Maintaining a culture of negotiation requires that children are viewed as equals to parents; and are not limited by rigid hierarchical boundaries. Her argument that children 'have a place in the family' seeks to confirm her belief in reinforcing an asymmetrical relationship between children and adult and this contradicts with the Norwegian understanding of egalitarianism and child competency that permeates the society. Wiktorina's inclination to upholding positional distance between adults and children is an attitude that scholars would argue as being culturally imbued. In contrast, according

to Sommer et al. (2010) “the strong individuation perspective on the child is one of the most remarkable and persistent child-view of late modern Scandinavian cultures...the perception of self is coined as highly *independent* compared to the collectivized child-views of *interdependence*” (pp. 10-11).

Obligations (duties) and responsibilities are cultural values that parents attempt to transmit to their children in delineating relationships (Sam and Virta, 2003). This point was alluded to by Natalia. Her position typifies what Singelis et al. (1995) explain as a collectivistic ideal where the social behavior of members are determined by norms, duties and obligations. Hence Natalia’s interrogating that “*if children are just sitting around at home, why shouldn’t they help out with some chores?*” She is of the opinion that children’s indulgence in domestic chores can help to ease the burden of the parents. Her contrasting this to a ‘*Norwegian way*’ is exemplified by what (Stefansen and Aarseth, 2011) consider person-centered families. In such families “boundary procedures are weak and flexible and emphasize person rather than position...members would be making their roles rather than stepping into them” (p. 392). This point is further substantiated by Sommer (2005) whose study found that independence was a highly valued quality that Scandinavian mothers imparted to their children, in comparison to others such as responsibility, consideration for others and obedience. Likewise, Sam and Virta (2003) found that in comparison to ethnic Norwegians and Swedish citizens, immigrant parents were significantly more in favor of transmitting values of obligations and responsibilities to children compared to rights which the ethnic majority preferred.

5.1.2 Caring for the Elderly

The mothers were very explicit with distinguishing what they perceived were the main values which underscores ‘ideal’ Norwegian parenting and this was unanimously described as a family centered on a ‘free’, independent and competent child. The mothers were able to cite their main inhibitions with fully accepting the autonomy allotted to ethnic Norwegian children. I find an exemplar in Emna’s account:

In our country, taking care of the older people is the responsibility of the children or younger ones. They can live with us and even though it is not easy to care for them, we still do. In Norway, I can see the older people living in homes and they are hardly even visited by their children. It might also have something to do with the way they raise children to be very independent. You can see when the children get to eighteen for example, they get out and live their own lives. Raising children to be so independent can be positive and negative somehow also. (Emna)

The mother is of the idea that nurturing independence in children, as is customary in the Norwegian society, negatively affects the child’s care for other members of the family, especially the elderly. Her position is rooted in the cultural expectations of responsibility for geriatric care to be the responsibility of the extended family irrespective of the difficulties faced in fulfilling this obligation as her quote outlines: “*they live with us even though it is not easy to care for them*”. Researchers found that collectivistic cultures generally emphasizes collective identity, emotional dependence, in-group solidarity, harmony, duties, and obligations. This is measurable to individualistic Western cultures, principled in autonomy, emotional independence, and the

primacy of personal goals over group goals. Among collectivistic communities, the maintenance of relationships are crucial and its sustenance is far more important than the cost of its lifespan. In an individualistic environment however, the durability of relationships are determined by the cost of its up-keep (Singelis et al., 1995). Individualism outlines a society where social behavior is determined on a contractual basis; whereas collectivism outlines specific rules, norms and obligations which serve to recommend acceptable behavioral patterns (ibid, 1995).

Lack of care and accountability to family members are regarded as by-products of the ‘Western’ ideologies as it ‘frees’ children from their obligation to their communities and families. From Kemi’s perspective,

When I was young, I didn’t watch my parents do things on their own and ignore helping. But here it is different...That’s why we see now-when the parents are old, the children do not see it as a responsibility to look for them, care for them and so forth. This does not happen where we come from. But, when a child was brought up to show help, and to show care, then they grow up with that belief as a way of life. It is sad how the old parents are lonely and even neglected by their children; nobody to show them love...children don’t come around because they were not brought up that way (Kemi)

An inspection of Kemi’s narrative indicate on one hand, a reminiscence of her childhood obligations to her household, and on the other, how this value has crafted her unquestioning loyalty to lending assistance to her parents. Her narrative delves further into some of the values underpinned in collectivistic societies. In such a setting, individuality recedes before the community’s interest as individual interests and self-determination are subordinated to the group’s interest (Kagaticibasi, 2005). In her opinion, introducing children to duties and responsibilities, produces a caring child who takes initiative to support the older generation. Kemi’s statement: “*when the child was brought up to care...way of life*” concretizes this notion.

5.1.3 An Emphasis on Respect/Discipline

There is a way that we were brought up and of course, there is a way that we were expected to bring up our children; based on the way that we were raised. But here in Norway, its actually very different for example, a typical Norwegian parent does not believe in something we call discipline. We do not tolerate a child talking back to the parent; because we expect that a child should respect. We believe in correction, but I think most Norwegian parents do not have the same belief. They believe that the child should be allowed to do as they will; it’s his choice, it’s his rights... But come on, who do we call a child, if a child is allowed to do everything he wants whether stupid or sensible?...Children are allowed to do whatever they want...and I’m not in agreement with that in any way...we were brought up to respect our parents, we were brought up to help our parents. (Kemi)

For me it’s really important to raise children with respect and freedom to me should really be limited...I get compliments from my daughter’s teacher all the time that she is a good, respectful student and that is one of our primary values. I try to teach my children to have respect, especially to the elders...for example children should not raise their voices higher than the adult in a conversation...respect is a very important...for me it’s really puzzling that Norwegian children hardly show any respect to adults. (Amira)

The narrative by Kemi, highlights several temporal elements. She assessed parenting by first positioning herself as a parent within the Norwegian context and juxtaposing that with her own childhood and the parentage that she was exposed to, evident in her statements: “*there is a way that we were brought up...based on the way we were raised*”. Kemi’s remark echoes the thoughts of researchers such as (Quinn, 2005; Bourdieu, 1986; De Mol et al., 2013) that parenting is learnt behavior that is also transmitted from one generation to the next. The mother believes that it is only fitting that she raises her children the way she was parented, regardless of the different cultural context that she now lives. Quinn (2005) sees parenting rooted in cultural models that strategically and routinely specify child-rearing models aimed at producing a ‘desired’ result in children becoming the adult that carers desire them to become; confirmed by the argument that “cultural values about the kind of adult parents strive to raise seep into even routine care-taking, instruction in practical knowledge, and the management of children’s security and development” (ibid, p. 479). Likewise, the social construction theory asserts that in the practice of parenting, “individuals receive cultural messages regarding the roles they should assume and how these roles might be fulfilled” (Francis-Connolly, 2003, p. 179). Thus, Kemi sees it her responsibility to instill respect in her children as she was brought up to be respectful to others. Her comments suggest that she is of the opinion that autonomy is inhibiting to this cherished value being taught to children. Her emphasis on respect is reverberated by Amira who expresses that it is an important character trait for children to emulate.

For Kemi, respect is achieved through disciplining, an imperative that “*a typical Norwegian parent does not believe in*”. She continues to point out that “*we believe in something called correction*”. This she furthers, is not endorsed by the Norwegian society. From my analysis, her statement is two-folds, firstly ‘*respect*’ requires obedience, a quality that is not highly valued in Scandinavian societies as (Gullestad, 1996; Sommer 2005; Sommer et al., 2010) would suggest. Secondly, there are different approaches taken for ‘*disciplining/correcting*’ children and some, though culturally supported, are tabooed in the Scandinavian context-methods such as hitting, pinching, or corporal punishment. I make the assumption that her reference to ‘*correction*’ may be included such modes of disciplining as there is a popular belief that one ‘*should not spear the rod and spoil the child*’, thus disciplining is of central importance. However, Dencik (1989) laments that ideal virtues such as obedience and modesty are relatively obsolete in the Nordic region as parents of today cannot forcibly demand respect from children, neither can they use the model of their own upbringing as defense for commanding such. Similarly, (Sommerfeldt, Hauge and Øverlien, 2014) outline that there is a universally embraced zero tolerance for such *violent* means of disciplining children among Nordic societies. However, they explain that “*culture, in terms of parents' values and traditions, serves as a frame of reference for child-rearing methods, including views on the use of corporal punishment of children*” (p. 8). An example of the cultural traditions is hinted at by Rose:

And compared to my cultural background, though I’ve lived here for years, it is different because of the way when it comes to terms of respect and listening to children. In my culture, their words do not count so much...I mean we listen but to how far do we regard their input is the most important, you know? In fact, in African culture, respect is so highly rated, there is no equality really. There is a hierarchy that you have to respect-there is a king, a queen, prince etc... Because of this hierarchy, the demand for the respect is very

high. So having my children caution me that I have no right to talk to them in certain manner, you can just imagine how that felt. (Rose)

Dahlstedt (2009) explains that immigrant parents will have to relinquish certain expectations of children when they come to such a society where those values are met with disapproval on several levels including laws, social institutions and economic constructs. As expressed by Rose, her expectations of her children for them to be obedient to her soon became conflictual. Research on immigrant families suggest that incidences of intergenerational conflicts are prevalent phenomena in acculturating groups. Rose's narrative identify the source of these conflicts: primarily former cultural socialization practices employed by parents. In Rose's case, her experience of a hierarchical society brings to life what Wiktoria had previously mentioned: children having a 'place' in families and as such respecting elders is of paramount value. Rose continues expressing that:

...They would use certain words like 'dum' (dumb) which to them means nothing serious, but to us is a big deal. Or when you are talking to a child and he/she just walks away instead of listening...It's disrespectful when they walk away from me. So these things are what cause friction because I was used to whenever my parents talk to me, to sit and listen. I couldn't even think of walking away from them! Children here challenge your decision, they know they have the liberty to and they use it! I'm the parent here, but they tell you 'you need to listen to me as well, mom or dad! See, we were not brought up to be challengers to our parents. We were brought up to listen and be obedient; but here when they challenge you, what do you do?...Because of my cultural influence and the Norwegian influence, there's a kind of conflict...they don't really deeply understand my cultural background. They see their mother as being Norwegian and so they tend to think that if my friends can do this at home, I can as well do the same thing. However, my cultural background tells me that there are things that I can accept from you as a child; and there are things that are not acceptable. Like in my house, we are used to division of labor. You know, when you give instructions, you want the child to follow immediately; but here, my children will tell me, I will do it later and sometimes they don't do it at all. And when they don't do it, what do you do? I start demanding that 'this is your duty, you are supposed to do it...but sometimes I end up repeating three, four times or I have to do it myself and it irritates me. But where I grew up, when you are given an instruction, you obey immediately. (Rose)

The acculturative gap represented in Rose's narrative is has also been found in studies of this nature (e.g. Lim et al., 2008; Sam and Virta, 2003; Sam and Berry, 1995; Sam, 1994). Most findings point to the fact that immigrant parents might be hesitant to accept the values of the resettlement society, while children are keener to doing so. The cultural conflicts arise when parents attempt exercising parental authority which clashes with the children's rights. As Rose stated "*children here challenge your decision, they know they have the liberty to and they use it*". Her narrative indicates that she feels cornered to exercise her parental authority in the Norwegian society that is focused on child-centeredness. Her repeatedly asking "*what do you do?*" suggests that she has had to adjust her parenting strategies since she is aware that children have a supportive environment that endorses their means to challenge their parent's authority. This theme was a resounding finding among the participants of the study. The parents tend to think that the possession of

power that children hold in this kind of society renders parents almost powerless and that it affects others areas of their upbringing; not only discipline.

5.1.4 A Focus on Education

Through the study parents points out that their inability to exercise parental authority is also met on the subject of valuing education which for some of parents, intensifies the intergenerational conflict in their families. While the mothers explain that they were culturally fashioned to value education, it is rather approached differently in the Norwegian education system. The narratives of both Rose and Wiktorina explain:

...where I come from, education is very important. It is highly regarded as the basis for success. We really advise and encourage our children to get the best and when a child comes failing in that aspect, then there's a kind of conflict. Because it is hard to tell the child, I want you to do this/that...I want you to study because of how the system is...When you see that there is a poor performance, you put all the resources possible into helping the child to improve but the Norwegian approach is 'just leave the child, the child will grow, you don't need to stress the child to do anything now' and that is my personal experience. For my child when she was doing badly, they were saying oh, she will grow.... I think to them, they take life easy, but we see our children as...you have to be the best at what you do. I would not want to see my child as a failure. You know, I want to see my child as somebody who succeeds. (Rose)

... For the Norwegian way, this model says that all children are equal. Norwegian teachers might say to the children: it is important to do your homework; but they don't demand quality. I think quality is important to education...I think it's not good for children and the education program could be better. I mean, teachers should put more demands on children. The primary school in Norway is without exams and I think that this make children more laidback with homework and learning. This style of teaching doesn't give children any enthusiasm about life or learning. (Wiktorina)

The narratives reverberate that the cultural clashes encountered are indeed multifaceted. The parents' emphasis that education is approached with less aggression in this environment, causing children to be more "*laidback*". Wiktorina is of the idea that this is because there is a focus on equality for all children. This point of view is shared by researchers such (Gullestad, 1997; Križ and Skivenes, 2010; Eriksen, 2013) who indicate that organizing concepts such as equality conceived as sameness ('likhet') is a cultural theme that crafts the everyday Norwegian life. Thus, being content with children's 'average' academic performance is a force for immigrant parents to reckon with. Rose is of the notion that children should "*be the best at what you do*" and that extra provisions will be supplied to ensure that this is materialized. Her approach mirrors what Cohen (2004) defines as an egocentric level of parental awareness. At this level, parents see children as what one could refer to as a 'life project' where the ultimate aim is to identify and embellish the potentialities in children that they see fit to harness; with or without the child's input. There is no room for failure in such an environment. With an egocentric parent, children are tailored with the intention to become the 'best of the best' in whatever they pursue. In a comparative study on school satisfaction of immigrant children versus ethnic Norwegian children, Grødem (2008) found that more immigrant children showed a higher level of school satisfaction in relation to their Norwegian classmates because "immigrant children will be told by older family members that education is their ticket to success in the host country that out of respect for themselves, their

parents and their community, they have to work hard” (p. 199). Children are more motivated to work harder because parents use their own experience of hardship to fuel an inspiration to either achieve what their parents did not or follow a path of a successful family repertoire. Another parent, Natalia also identifies with the arguments proposed by Rose and Wiktoria. In her narrative, she outlines that:

I try to teach my daughters something academic because in Poland they learn to count, learn the alphabet, how to spell simple words and then when they go to school they can read, write, at least the basics. But in Norway, they don't do that and it was a big shock for me... That's why sometimes I think it might be a better idea to have the kids complete primary education back in Poland. My three year old can count to ten and that's something I have to teach her at home. Children need a good foundation in education so that they can have a good future. Playing is one part of learning, but education is important. This system hardly teaches them that they them that education is a priority... My friends are scared to teach their children, but I'm not. I want them to have a good start. My friends care a lot about what the Norwegian people think, but some things I just don't agree with so I do it my way because I want my children to be smart. (Natalia)

From Natalia's reasoning, an emphasis on play in early childhood education is tampering with the “*good foundation*” that is necessary to prepare children for a “*good future*”. She believes that there should be a focus on more concrete learning outcomes such as reading and writing. However, at the heart of the negotiation culture in Norway is the importance of democratization for children which is partly achieved through the concept of the ‘playing, learning child’. This ideology fosters an independent child, creating his/her own concept of the world that is not influenced by an adult's ideal. Sommers et al. (2010) articulate that “play can lead to discoveries, sometimes scientific, as well as exceeding boundaries” (p. viii). The belief is that boundaries can be limiting to a child's creativity when imposed by adults. This approach to learning reiterates Norway's focus on children's competence. However, this ideal to acknowledging children's agency is not endorsed by all cultural groups.

The above discussions summarize the theme: that of cultural clashes identified by the parents in the study. The clashes are understood and dealt with differently by the mothers; however, the issue of a competent, robust and autonomous Norwegian child seems to be the issue primarily confronted with, but fragments into other areas of concern such as education, discipline/respect and exercising parental authority.

5.2 Theme 2: A Learning/Unlearning Process: Sociocultural Adaptation

Studies on immigration theorize that regardless of the multiplicity of reasons motivating acculturation; adaptation always results (Sam and Berry, 2010; Berry et al., 2006; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999; Berry, 1997); however the difficulty and eventual acculturation mode varies from one individual/group to the next. In a general sense adaptation signifies the changes that take place in behavioral patterns in response to the demands of a new society. A distinction has been made between psychological and sociocultural adaptation. While both could have been the case of participants, particular attention has been focused on the

incidences of sociocultural adaptation which speaks to how effectively can individuals maneuver the necessary sociocultural skills to live successfully in the new cultural milieu (Sam and Berry, 2010). Listening to the narratives of the research participants, it is obvious that some level of behavioral shift had taken place in their parenting practices; whether deliberately or otherwise influenced. Rose's story explaining the sociocultural adjustments that she made to her parenting regime gives a detailed account of the complicated nature of adaptation:

My culture is quite different-when I came here, I had my culture behind me but I quickly learned that if you really try to follow the parenting rules, it helps you in building a very good relationship with the children. I remember that I would quickly raise my voice to be more firm but, do I really need to shout to be heard? I don't need to pinch a child or instill fear to get my way with them. Instead, I have tried to build a very good relationship with them...Initially, it wasn't easy to engage my children in decision-making; but I found that when I did, I found more peace because I listen to them...So now we learn to interact, allow them to voice how they think things should be done. This is the kind of parent we've become. I've learnt to respect my children's opinion and also take them into action, not just you deciding for them...That is what we have to do-kind of negotiating and compromising with each other... In my culture there is only one option-take it or leave it! But here, there's an explanation that goes with no; and likewise an explanation that goes with yes... As parents, we need to learn to give room for mistake because sometimes we are too hard on the child to succeed. However, we are so scared that mistakes will ruin the child, it will give them a bad name, things like that-that is the culture I grew up in. (Rose)

Rose's narrative allows us to compare/contrast the two opposing cultural ideals influencing her parental practices. She first reflected that her culture has been instrumental in informing her parenting style "*I remember I would quickly raise my voice to be firm...*" but she acknowledged that the present culture offers different instructions and thus made the necessary adjustments: "*this is the kinds of parents we've become*". Rose points out thought that "*initially, it was not easy...*" Berry and colleagues have made similar inferences that adaptation is long term process and does not always lead to positive adjustments to the new society (1997, p.20). In Rose's case, this process aided positive results as she was able to "*find more peace because I listen*". More specifically, sociocultural adaptation follows a linear path and increases with time according to Berry. With this fact, one can then see the gradual change in Rose's parenting style from being "*quick to shout*" to adapting an approach that seemed to reflect the Norwegian ideal parenting style: "*kind of negotiating and compromising with each other*". Norway's culture of negotiation requires parents to relinquish positional distancing of children and to see them as equal instead. According to Stefansen and Aarseth (2011), such an approach to parenting instructs a child-centered approach to parenting; which defies the barriers built by the traditional positional family types (Gullestad 1997, 1996). Rose's cultural predisposition to a collectivistic society built on deference to authority and social positioning is a significant difference to the egalitarian family relationship which she now respects. Berry's acculturation theory identifies this phenomenon as 'cultural shedding' which significantly propels the adaptation process through progressions of learning and unlearning. In principle, it is closely related to re-socialization which is suggestive of re-shaping previously learnt skills to respond to the environmental demands and being better able to identify

with the new environment. This phenomenon is more explicitly realized by Emna's statement as she tells:

Actually, I don't live like my typical cultural people live. We are in Norway, so I try to do it like they do here. I'm convinced by the way they raise their children, I like that. Maybe I feel more Norwegian. I have been living here for most of my adult life and I've learnt so much from them. Actually, it doesn't hurt to learn new and good things so I try to practice doing it the way they do. Like listening to my children...Maybe others think that they don't have to do that but it will turn into problems, you know?...maybe they do get themselves into problems actually with the way they raise their children. (Emna)

Emna's account highlights certain fundamental features that seek to intensify sociocultural adaptation. Explained by Berry (1997), "good sociocultural adaptation is predicted by cultural knowledge, degree of contact and intergroup attitudes (p. 21). Emna has been residing in Norway for over twenty years, thus she is fully integrated into the Norwegian way of life: "maybe I feel more Norwegian". Hence, this creates minimal cultural hurdles in adjusting her parenting style. To make this point more salient, I could compare Emna's position to Natalia's who has been living in Norway for a much shorter period of time. Natalia has acknowledged that some cultural shedding and learning are imminent; however not to the extent that Emna obviously has. She states:

I think that it is important to compromise between Norwegian and Polish ways of parenting. I cannot agree with everything, but I should do it....There are many things about the Norwegian system that I endorse. (Natalia)

Even though it is evident that Natalia has taken initiative to adapt to the 'Norwegian way' of parenting, she has a greater 'cultural distance' than does Emna based on the fact that Emna is not more acquainted with the Norwegian society due to her year of residency in the country in comparison to Natalia. Thus Emna has had enough time to normalize the cultural conflicts now faced by Natalia. It is obvious that for Emna, a high degree of cultural learning has taken place. During this process, she has "unlearned" those undesirable behavioral repertoire that are incompatible in the current Norwegian society in order to better acclimatize herself with the new context. Natalia is on her way to acceptance as she is still warming up to the cultural difference. Like Emna that has been residence in Norway for a long time, Ayana also shows a higher degree of comfortableness with the dominant way of life. Her narrative elaborates:

You know, I've learnt to respect other's opinion and take their input seriously on how I raise my children. For example, teachers, the people who work in barnehage, they analyze the children and give you feedback, positive feedback or negative feedback. I've tried to do my best to take their advice. At first it was very uncomfortable to hear somebody else instruct you on how to raise your child so it took time for me to see that they also want the best for my child as well and I have to take their advice seriously if I want my child to be the best that she or he can be. I've learnt a lot about the children and myself actually.

As the mother states, taking directives from another is something that she found extremely distasteful. However, having lived in Norway for approximately fifteen years, Ayana has learned that such actions taken by teachers is not necessarily intrusive, but that the intentions is that "*they also want the best for my child as well*". Another contributing factor could be that Ayana has had a longer first-hand experience with the kindergarten

arrangement as more children than Natalia for example who has had only one child in the kindergarten in Norway. While Ayana is now appreciates their interventions as she sees it as a means to improve on her parental abilities, Natalia is still a bit disgruntled with this kind of interrogation. She explains:

...I always have to explain why she has a bruise on her, why is she tired at school, why is she sleepy, why doesn't she want to eat, why is she sad today as if she can't have a bad day or she can't be tired. Almost nothing goes unseen. For the first few months of kindergarten, I can see with these questions -they don't know the child as yet but after they get used to the child and still continue with these questions, I'm wondering why, what are they looking for? It feels intrusive! Yes, you must know what is going on with your kids but they do this almost every day!

The mother's reaction to teacher's interest in the wellbeing of her daughter is one of discontent as she is yet to achieve the level of cultural learning that Emna and Ayana for example have amassed. As researchers such as Berry point out though, sociocultural adaptation is an ongoing process that is achieved over-time. There is still a large cultural gap for Natalia to fill.

5.3 Theme 3: Dealing with the Issue of Cultural Distances

Cultural distance is one of the driving forces affecting an individual's/group's ability to adapt to the acculturating environment. It identifies the similarities and dissimilarities between two cultures in contact (Sam and Berry, 2010; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Berry, 1997, 2005). The more significant the cultural distance, the greater the cultural shedding, the greater the cultural learning and likewise, the greater the struggles or acculturative stress encountered in a bid to adapt to the new society. The cultural specific variables building the gap between two cultures in regards to sociocultural adaptation are mainly centered on differences in rules, conventions, norms, values, languages and so forth (Masgoret and Ward, 2006). Cultural disparity in the rules governing interpersonal behaviors are broadly understood through the varied principles underpinning collectivistic versus individualistic societies (Singelis et al., 1995; Kagitcibasi, 2005; Triandis et al., 1990). Among observable norms in collectivist cultures is the emphasis on hierarchical structured relationships which features a dominant male figure at the helm, a subordinate female and children endowed with particular duties facilitating a responsibility to their community and the care of others (Hart, 2008). The case for the individualist family denotes greater emphasis on horizontal relationship characterized by an emphasis on a more egalitarian unit. In this study, I observed such disparity in parenting values rooted in these extremes of patterning culture. Take Kemi's narrative for example:

...You can't talk to your children, you can't correct them, and you can't advise them because there is this law of freedom...freedom of choice. This is strange to a lot of foreigners with a different kind of up-bringing. When you come to a culture like this and you want to bring up your child the way you were brought up-it might not be the best in relation to what they [Norwegians] consider the best-but you are proud of your culture, it is what makes you who you are. And you want to do the same for your children...and it's a challenge in this kind of environment. (Kemi)

The cultural distance between Kemi's own respects for hierarchical family relationships versus the prescribed egalitarianism existing in the Norwegian society is a reality that she has to grapple with in regards to the way she sees and treats her children. The vertical relationships embedded in the Nigerian society is a huge leap to acknowledge the "*law of freedom*" that ethnic Norwegian children are privy to.

5.3.1 The Muslim Situation

To compound the argument of freedom for children, the study has found that religion can be a significant value-laden inhibitor to parents motivating such ideal, especially for the Muslim community. An assessment of Amira's narrative suggests:

The children here have this freedom like to have boyfriends for example and we think that this kind of relationship should be reserved until you are grown like eighteen when you can think clearly and make the right decisions... We all have our own values and there are some things that I want my children to take after me. For example one of my daughters is experiencing bullying at school because she wears her hijab but I think that they should understand that this is our way of being and respect it... I cannot say this is right, you cannot say this is wrong because we all have our own different ways to bring up our family... Girls don't leave the house before marrying and that is our culture... (Amira)

There are several cultural values upheld in the Norwegian society that contradicts with Amira's position, thus intensifying the gap in her intercultural contact with this society. Primarily, the autonomy of children and the issue of gender equality are placed under the radar in this narrative. The mother is of the idea that children are incapable of making constructive decisions before the age of eighteen when they can "*think clearly*". If one should compare this reasoning to idea of a 'competent child' that is nurtured by ethnic Norwegian parents and the society at large, the gap is rather enormous. According to Eriksen (2013), "gender equality has become a value central to Norwegian self-understanding" (p. 9) and women wearing hijabs is believed to be a disadvantageous for women. As a hallmark for coming close to achieving a gender neutral society, this difference in ideology about the significance of the hijab worn by Muslim women is a very controversial subject and widens the cultural distance between this community and the Norwegian society. Ayana, of Somali ethnicity explains the vigilance in the wider society towards Muslim girls:

The negative side is for example my daughters,...sometimes they want to wear hijabs to school but when they do, the teachers always ask them whether they were forced to wear the hijab and they always try to tell them that it's not right for them to wear it. In the media, there is a lot of coverage and debate about the hijab. I think that the general Norwegian people have a negative impression of a woman wearing a hijab and that can be a negative thing for a girl that goes in second class because she has to defend herself, explain herself, why she wants to wear a hijab. It's kind of a procedure in schools that they need to have a conversation with the children and tell them that they don't have to wear it if they don't want to and whether to find out whether it was their choice or the parent's choice. (Ayana)

In Ayana's case, her or her daughter's consent to wearing the hijab is further affirmed by official authorities at school. One could assume that in Somali, this is a practice that is taken-for-granted. However, in this cultural context, authorities ensure that the children are comfortably and

independently making that decision. In the school setting, teachers are mandated with the task of ensuring that children have the opportunity to exercise their *right to self-determination* as is stipulated by section 33 of the Norwegian Children Act. This interrogative strategy could be understood from several vantage points including acknowledging children's agency and also the fact that family matters are discursively intertwined with the wider public sphere due to the construct of the welfare state (Björk Eydal and Satka, 2006).

5.3.2 'Others' Taking a Vested Interest in the Wellbeing Children

In many societies, irrespective of the influence of external socializing agents on the family, primary care and responsibility for the welfare and wellbeing of children is deemed the family's obligation. This is more evident in countries that follow a liberal welfare model as opposed to the Social Democratic welfare regime specific to Scandinavia (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Gilbert et al., 2011). As explained by Sommers et al., (2010) "this model is rooted in a fundamental public acceptance of societies' and families' shared responsibility for supporting, protecting, caring, and enhancing the life conditions for the next generation" (p. 8). In essence, the guiding principles of the welfare state has engineered a society where public barriers are easily extinguishable in order to access the private dwellings of families in securing equal opportunities for its members. This reality is however non-existent in Kemi's society of origin and hence her interpretation of the interest of school officials in keeping tabs on children and their wellbeing:

And unfortunately, many parents say that even in the schools, the children are being monitored... When a parent hears that my little child is being interrogated in schools about the conduct of the parent at home, I think it is depressing. I mean you should have the right to your own privacy; it is my personal business and nobody should violate that. I mean, you wanna' react because it shouldn't really be anybody's business what happens in your home. People ask these children information to find out how you speak to them, whether they are being spanked, even that alone I think should be reviewed. It makes me wanna ask: What benefit is it to the government? Are they all intentionally seeking information to have children separated from their parents? What's the goal?... Because when you ask such questions from children in schools about what's going on in their homes, I believe that such questions should not be asked to children in private or without the consent of their parents or without the parents present... From what I've heard also, people feel as though this is a deliberate attack on immigrant families. Why is the situation not the same for Norwegian children? (Kemi)

The mother regards it an unfortunate ordeal for "*the government*" to extend such interest in "*private*" family matters. However, as scholars purport, there is a thin line separating public life from private in Norway (Björk Eydal and Satka, 2006). Califa offers a practical example of the authors' point of view:

... You've never heard that in Somali. They don't have a state that is your second mom and dad (so they call it) so I think it's very shocking when you come here to hear that 'the state owns your child too, you can't do whatever you want with your child-it's not only yours... In Somali it was normal to hit your child if they do something wrong. When parents come here, they do it and they don't understand that it's not allowed (Califa).

Considering the state as a "*second mom and dad*" speaks volume to centeredness of child's wellbeing to in public arena and the pervasiveness of the 'state' in the family. The responsibility

to protect the wellbeing of children is carried out by other stakeholders such as the school. For example, teachers (especially kindergarten staff) are obliged by the Kindergarten Act § 22, second paragraph and Welfare Act § 6-4 to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the CWS. Skivenes (2011) offers justification that the Norwegian welfare system can be classified as a “family service-mandatory reporting system...that takes a family-sensitive and therapeutic approach to families and children...any public (or private) employee is required by law to report any suspicions of maltreatment towards children” (p. 154). According to Kemi, people have come to the conclusion that “*this is a deliberate attack on immigrant families*”; however, these parents are unaware that the same interrogative procedures apply to all students: ethnic Norwegians and those of minority background alike. I deduce that immigrant parents, being oblivious to the existence of such ‘family-sensitive’ system, interpret that their children are intentionally being screened in the education system. From my understanding, this reality has given rise to increased apprehensiveness towards the child protective system.

5.4 Theme 4: Ambivalence towards CWS

It is safe to say that within the Norwegian society, the responsibility to safeguard the wellbeing of children is a duty shared by several stakeholders including the schools, communities, the welfare state, the child welfare services and certainly the family. The universal value of egalitarianism is one of the fundamental principles upon which respective institutions design their mandate. Throughout the discussions with participants, I noticed that the CWS, referred to primarily as ‘barnevernet/barnevern’ by informants, significantly impresses on the way immigrant parents execute their parenting ideals. It is interesting to note that the participants had no personal contact with the organization, yet the institution was resoundingly mentioned irrespective of the theme under discussion. This theme was one of the most prevalent across the data set. Most of the narratives spoken by the mothers clearly hint at a contentious relationship between CWS and immigrant groups. I use Kemi’s narrative as a keen example:

There are cases where we hear that barnevernet took over the care of the child, for reasons such as a child saying that they want to move out, this needs more detailed assessment in my opinion...unless there is psychological or emotional conditions to separate the child, but actions based on your culture; then I think it should be reviewed. They need to understand why, why that style, why that rule, why that model for that family. When we do such things, we perceive that we are doing them out of love for the child. We try to instill values and take precautionary measures and it’s basically out of love for the child...Of course, not everybody will see it that way but it is striking a balance between caution and liberty. It is going to be a challenging battle or topic to understand when you see an immigrant coming especially from our part of the world in the Western world. There will always be this friction between caution and liberty-we are used to caution. Children are expected to be mindful of themselves, how they behave towards their parents, you know? I believe that they should pay more attention to the values your culture has instilled like respecting your parents, doing what your parents expect you to like focusing on your studies rather than other things...There are certain cases where they really need to do something-such as abuse, addiction, neglect and all that. But, there are some I think that just need to be assessed and if it’s a cultural difference, then it should be sorted out...
(Kemi)

From Kemi's narrative one can sense that the primary antagonistic issue for parents of immigrant background is the misunderstanding between what they consider appropriate parenting practices versus those preferred in the Norwegian context. CWS is then seen as the family's 'policing' agency that ensures that families are fulfilling desired expectations. Incidentally, statistics indicate that in Norway, ethnic minority children are 2.7 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home-care in comparison to ethnic Norwegian children (Dyrhaug and Sky, 2015). Comparative studies on child protection practices with immigrant families in Norway and England found that welfare workers in Norway (Scandinavia in general) and England utilize different approaches when assessing and making decisions about child welfare cases regarding immigrant children (Hort, 1997). Findings show that child welfare workers in England tend to be more empathetic towards and cognizant of cultural differences; while workers in Norway tend to be more ethnocentric and assimilationist (e.g. Kriz and Skinvess, 2010; Hort, 1997). In their study comparing child welfare workers in Norway and England, (Kriz and Skivenes, 2010; 2010b) concluded that whereas "social workers in Norway act as cultural instructors: they focus on the needs of the minority child and instruct parents about Norwegian values and the Norwegian welfare system, social workers in England are cultural learners" (p. 4). The authors explained that this situation can be understood through a multicultural lens which threatens to eradicate the delineated line between what is considered public versus private family affairs. The dilemma stems from the state's bid to secure the best interest of children. Strategies taken may conflict with the parent's; who ought to have the right to determine how they raise their children. The situation is compounded by Dahlstedt (2009) and Brembeck, et al., (2004), both supporting the notion that immigrant parents in Scandinavia are generally considered to be lacking in their parental abilities. This finding seeks to coincide with Kemi's notion that there is a lack of understanding as to how parents go about 'doing parenting' versus the expectations of the Norwegian society. Here is Wiktorja's position on the issue:

Sometime ago I was afraid that maybe we have too strict rules in our family. Strict, not for my children but for the Norwegian culture maybe. We know of a Norwegian institution [CWS] and a lot of us are afraid to be stricter with our children because we run the risk of this institution coming to our family and questioning us or the children. Friends who had been living longer and more familiar with the system cautioned us not to be so strict because even our neighbor can call the barnevarnet if they think that our children are unhappy. We also read a lot about different scenarios where this institution can intervene in your family. We were afraid and even though we would prefer to raise our children the way we like, it is difficult. I think that it is difficult for a lot of Polish and immigrant families because we all know of barnevarn and how they work. (Wiktorja)

Based on the parents' arguments, I comprehend that one important dilemma for immigrants to understand the difference between child welfare and child protection approaches. The latter intervenes in families as a protective mechanism when all the family's resources have been exploited and has proven insufficient in protecting the child from harm. A child welfare system on the contrary, is concerned with the overall wellbeing of both children and families and provides the relevant services to address their holistic needs; incorporating both child protection and welfare (Gilbert, Parton and Skivenes, 2011). I will assume that most parents are familiar with a child protection system where the state's intervention is not necessary unless the family has proven to be lacking in fulfilling its primary functions. Kemi offers an example when she stated that "*there*

are certain cases...such as abuse addiction...” Such intervention often carries negative connotations; thus families endeavor to avoid this. Norway employs a child welfare approach, indicating that family service practitioners are cognizant that the child’s everyday being affects his/her welfare. Therefore, care for the child and the family is an ongoing process instead of abrupt and conditional one exemplified in a child protection system. For parents who are prior exposed to a child protection system (or no child welfare provisions all together) find the child welfare stakeholders intrusive and illogical in employing their intervention mechanisms. Barnevern’s governing welfare principle is the root cause of the existing relationship between immigrant parents and the institution. The unawareness of immigrants to the operations of the CWS is and likewise the unawareness of the institution in understanding diversity in cultural imperatives is also a common discussion among respondents. As highlighted by Ayana’s statement:

Here in Norway, they have rules and regulations on how you are supposed to raise your children...for new comers to Norway, they should get a course of something on how barnevernet works so they have a knowledge about it because if you don't have knowledge, then you don't know what's right versus what's wrong. Like in Somalia, it's normal to hit children and when I came to Norway, nobody informed me that the rule here was different. I heard about it from other Somali people that if you hit your children, they are gonna take them away so people can get misinformation and they can get scared. I think there is a fear between barnevernet and us. They play a big role in how parents raise their children and how they feel. So I think they should invest in giving information about barnevern because it's as well important on how you should raise your children... It's not a negative thing if they tell us. (Ayana)

Again, Ayana’s narrative is indicative of a huge gap in immigrant families’ knowledge of the child welfare system and it’s mandate. There is much ‘story-telling’ among immigrant communities about what the CWS actual does. My assumption is that parents frame an idea of the intensions of the institution as Ayana shows: *“I have heard from other Somali people”*. Earlier, Wiktorja also alluded to the same. Thus, there are conclusions made about the institution that have been poisoned by the incidences that people choose to share about their encounter with the institution and not necessarily from personal experiences. Accessing the narratives, it is obvious that parents are genuinely fearful of interventions from the CWS. I take Rose as an example of how dreadfully fearful some immigrant parents are of the CWS:

I think that barnevernet as an institution should be very slow at removing children from the home, yet active in following up...Their conclusion is so deadly, that it tears families apart and that is my fear of having them intervening in my family... Come home...reason with us before you abduct our children. There should be a process, a dialogue directing parents to the right path and not just taking the child... What barnevernet needs to do is to intervene and help both the child and the family work out the differences and find that common ground. This is a better way of dealing with the problem I think. They were trained to ‘rescue’ children but what they need to understand it that your culture is something that lives in you and you can’t just abandon it at the drop of a hat. (Rose)

Much like Ayana, Rose has come to the conclusion that the CWS’s interventions are *“deadly that it tears families apart”*. Similar to the Somali society that is void of an organization such as the CWS where the child is the responsibility of both the state and the family, (Björk Eydal and Satka,

2006), the same can be said about the Nigerian society. The Norwegian CWS has since the last decade has become increasingly vigilant and ambitious in protection children at risk. To this end, more children have received service and similarly, more have been placed in out-of-home-care (Skiveness, 2011). Studies by (Kriz and Skiveness, 2010; 2010b) indicate the Norway is 'racially and ethnically blind' when matters pertaining to child welfare are being dealt with. Thus, optimal considerations are the care and protection of children. However, Sommers (1998) encourages practitioners working with matters pertaining to the child, family or care relations to see through critically reflective eyes as it is hardly possible to see an individual without cultural some sort of inheritance. These undetermined and 'unconscious inheritances' necessitates a practitioner's sensitivity to how people think, interpret and react to different situations. Thus, this theme brings to the fore the importance for institutions responsible for intervening in intercultural conflicts to see the world from the eyes of the minority culture. As Natalia advises, "*they [CWS] want everything to be done the Norwegian way, but they should sometimes put themselves in the shoe of a Polish, they should try to think like a Polish*". This coexistence necessitates compromise and negotiation as most mothers alluded to.

5.5 Theme 5: 'Living in two worlds'-striking a cultural balance

Sam and Berry (2006) comment that "when an individual or group comes into contact with another group that is culturally different, they may be forced to define a sense of identity in line with their ethnicity" (p. 21); an identity that was previously "taken for granted" as there was no motivation to really ponder on it prior to the acculturation process. Cultural identity conflicts are bound to occur in some scenarios and is an indicator of adaptation-maladaptation (Ward, 2008) due to the embeddedness of individuals in a particular cultural structure. For some, this may be a difficult task depending on how integrating into the new society is reacted to by their wider cultural communities and also the ease at which they can identify with the new culture or are received by the society. Sam and Virta, (2003) argue that through socialization and enculturation, parents and societies inculcate in their children the culture of the society they *belong*. In the context of immigration not only parents, but children must negotiate between the feelings of belongingness and deciding on one's cultural identity. This is further affected by general attitude of the receiving society towards the immigrants (Castles, 1998; Bauböck et al., 1996; Berry and Kalin, 1995). Thus, there is a tiered construction of the multiple adjustments that have to be facilitated in order that parenting practices may mirror the standard of the environs in which acculturating groups inhabit. That is at the individual, family and societal levels (Berry, 1992; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 1999; Lim et al., 2008). I can safely say that for all the participants in the study, the idea of being torn between two cultures was an awakening that resonated with their every parenting habit. Emna, of Muslim heritage verbosely narrates her ordeal:

One important value is that the girls cannot have sexual relationships before they get married. However, the girls especially when they get to sixteen or seventeen have a hard time, it is very difficult for them to live two different cultures, you know? I can understand that, because we live in Norway-even though we teach them about their own culture, it is not easy to balance both. For example children here when they get to eighteen years old, they are independent and busy with their lives, for us children are still very attached to their families even at that age...I know that many people who had girls, found it difficult to raise them...it can happen that they want to live their lives too, like other Norwegian girls their

age. It is not easy for them to live with two cultures-it can be successful as well as not.
(Emna)

The above narrative magnifies a key dilemma facing immigrant families in this study: relinquishing and conformity versus maintenance and participation. Emna vividly describes how grueling this confrontation can be generally, but particular for Muslim female teens taught to be reserved, obedient and value conscious in at home, in contrast to being bold, independent and expressive as is typical in their current environment. Conformity asks that cultural identity becomes more fluid and opened to accommodate differences. On the other hand, participation necessitates relinquishing and learning. According to Leibkind (2006) it is hardly possible to sever an individual's identity from his/her culture contour. For the Muslim women interviewed, their religious precepts were more than simply an ideology, but were portrayed as a way of life, a way of devising morals and an instructor of child-rearing practices. Another Muslim parent, Califa commented that "*our Somali culture and religion go in one*. Her social constructivist logic is echoed by Quinn (2005) who is of the notion that ethnic identity is tightly knitted in the way that different child-rearing communities approach parenting. Striking a balance between allowing young girls the freedom that the Norwegian society endorses and retaining their reserved Muslim culture is of grave concern for the mothers. Thus, the struggle to hold on to one's cultural identity is a steadfast hurdle confronting Muslim girls in particular. However, (Lim et al., 2008) state that while parents might be initially restricting towards children to participate in 'Western cultures' they ultimately become more accommodating and make efforts to blend both cultures. In a similar vein, Rose adds to the discussion:

I mean, for immigrant children, there are so many contradictions going on that is frustrating to them. Think about it, they are educated in one culture, then come home to another where values might be conflicting. Believe me, it is as frustrating and challenging for the parents as it is for the children. It is hard for us caught between two cultures. I remember when she was younger, my daughter comparing us to the Norwegian neighbors. It was hard explaining to her that what happens in her friend's house, is very different from what happens in ours. She said- 'but we are Norwegian's aren't we?' I said, 'yes we are but you can see that there is a difference'. But she would insist, 'I don't see anything wrong with it!' These are the situations that leave you cornered as immigrant parents when there is a persistent comparison that 'my friends are doing this, why shouldn't I?' ...When we come home, what is more dominant, is the Nigerian way of life, you understand? See, I'm a Nigerian and so too is my husband...Though we try to fit in this culture as much as we can, the dominant is what we are (Rose).

Rose's narrative allow one to envision the life of the immigrant child grappling with questions such as 'who am I?' and 'to which group do I belong?' (Sam and Berry, 2010). As the ones endowed with the task of transferring cultural traditions to the next generation, parents might be more likely to hold on to norms and values of their culture of origin while children are more likely to quickly adapt to the norms of the new society (Lim et al., 2008; Lim and Lim, 2003). Rose offered evidence of this fact by recounting her daughter comparing the family's practices to those of the ethnic Norwegian neighbors. The daughter questioning "*we are Norwegians aren't we?*" is testament that she unreservedly identifies as Norwegian while living in a household where the Nigerian culture is the "*more dominant way of life*". Sam and Berry (1995) have made similar

discovers which indicate that immigrant children are ‘caught in the cross-fire’ of two cultures when the socializing agents-the school and the family propose contradicting values for them to adapt to. The scholars suggest that children in these situations are more inclined to favor the values of the majority culture due to the pressure of ‘fitting-in’ with the wider social circle. This situation may even result in psychological stress for the child, leading to maladaptive acculturative strategies such as marginalization. Rose’s daughter was obviously confronted with this dilemma of wanting to be more ‘Norwegian’ but restricted by a home environment where the dominant culture was a ‘world apart’ from the reality of her peers. Sam and Berry highlight that the situation is further intensified when parents “look down up on the values and norms of the resettlement society; and the society in turn rejects the immigrant parents’ values and culture as a whole” (p. 20). In this case, the child is then forced to choose between the two cultures. Children are not the only ones faced with this challenge, it also applies to parents when both cultures are insistently clashing. Wiktorina makes an inference to this reality:

They [CWS] don’t understand that even though we live here, we are a legacy of our culture. They don’t remember that immigrant children also have a culture and it is not wrong for them to practice that culture. It is difficult for an immigrant family to live in another country that’s true. However, my question is it the best for our children to abandon their culture and concentrate only on Norwegian culture? I don’t think so! I think we need to find a common ground; we need to keep a lot of our culture but also adapt to the Norwegian way-that is how we will arrive at the best interest for our children. They live here so they need to know and understand the culture here and accept it. My children live here now, but their root is Polish...what is important is that national identity; from which country are their parents and grand-parents? What kind of culture do they have? What are their traditions? We don’t like many aspects of the Norwegian family model but we try to understand and make the best for our children. We understand that our children are living here and so they must be similar to their colleagues. It is wrong to be closed to the Norwegian way so the best thing to do is to find some kind of balance. (Wiktorina)

In their study assessing Norwegian child welfare worker’s perspective on immigrant parents’ on ethnic minority parents, (Kritz and Skiveness, 2010) articulate that an understanding of cultural differences breeds other structural, institutional and system-related challenges for families not only in child welfare, but also in other social systems, the school predominantly. The primary explanation is the discourse of ‘sameness’ which underlines the ‘ethno-culturally blind’ law directing the mandates of these systems (ibid). As a result, parents are expected to competently maneuver themselves within the specificities of the Norwegian culture. A reflection on Berry’s acculturative strategies would define such acculturative demand as assimilation; requiring ethnic minorities to become undistinguishable from the dominant ethnic group (Berry, 1997; 2005; 2010).An account from Rose elaborates on the subject: “*we try to adapt to this society by taking some of the cultural attitudes...I mean, when you don’t obey them, you get into trouble so you have to try to adhere to their way of life*”. A plausible explanation for this acculturative strategy taken is the country’s migration history (Berry, 1992; Berry and Kalin, 1995; Berry et al., 2006). Norway being a relatively culturally homogenous country, may somewhat account for the preferred acculturative strategy (Sam and Berry, 1995; Weslin 1993; Eriksen, 2013). The studies of Kritz and Skivenes (2010) reiterates this finding but provides a disclaimer as to reason Norwegian child welfare workers are regarded as ‘assimilationist’. They explain that while Norwegian workers carry that label, they are only partially assimilationist by informing immigrant parents about the

laws and Norwegian norms so that they would become bi-cultural, not mono-cultural, primarily “for the sake of their children” (p. 2649). While assimilation is not recognized as a maladaptive acculturative strategy, integration promises a level of cultural integrity as this approach allows immigrants to have a balance of both their culture of origin and the majority culture. Ward and Kennedy (1994) articulate that “both host and co-national identification are significant, and an integrated or bicultural approach facilitates both psychological and sociocultural adaptation during cross-cultural transitions” (p. 341). Ward and Kennedy advice that cross-cultural programs be designed to facilitate immigrants simultaneously maintaining a sense of identity with their host culture, while participating in the good intergroup relations with the host country.

5.6 Equating the Research Questions

From the thematic narrative analytical framework used to explicate the collected data, five substantive themes emerged. These themes can also be further validated in respect to the three overarching research questions that served as a skeletal framework for arranging the interview guide. Below, I will show more precisely how the research questions are explained by the results.

How does the understanding of a ‘Nordic’ socialization of childhood coincides with or differs from parent’s traditional way of ‘doing’ parenting?

The analysis presented substantiated evidence that immigrant parents perceived ‘their way of doing parenting’ staunchly different from the way that it is executed by the majority population. The divergence was more pronounced when subjects of child autonomy, child participation, obedience and duties for children came into questioning. Unlikely the research subjects who would rather children exude such qualities as obedience and responsibility to the family; they contrasted this ideal to the ‘free’, powerful, and to some extent self-interested and irresponsible ethnic Norwegian child who was on par with parental status and decision-making. The collectivistic-individualistic dichotomous patterning of cultural, clarified that most ethnic minority parents’ preferential parenting habits coincide more with former, while the Norwegian perspective reflected similarities to the latter. This finding is in accordance to similar studies undertaken by others such as (Sherr et al, 2011; Gullestad, 1996; Sam and Virta, 2003; Križ and Skivenes, 2010, 2010b; Singelis et al., 1995; Kagitcibasi, 2005).

How do parents cope with the acculturation process necessary for ‘learning’ and ‘unlearning’ parenting practices?

As the analysis indicates, parenting in the immigration context requires a process of socio-cultural readjustment, more so for the acculturating group. Themes that emerged from the study such as cultural balance and sociocultural adaptation encapsulates an on-going process of learning and unlearning which is necessary for immigrant parents to lessen the cultural gap existing between their ‘know how’ and the Norwegian expectation. The study indicates that parents would attempt using their own cultural predisposed parental mechanisms to design parenting practices. However, due to the occurrences of intergenerational gap coupled with, intercultural conflicts, cultural shedding and cultural learning (Berry 1997, 2005; Ward and Kennedy, 1993) would facilitate parents warming up to the dominant way of life. As the mothers alluded to, *there are rules about parenting in Norway but it is difficult to adapt to them all*. Listening to the narratives, it was clear

that parents were initially hesitant and even resistant towards accepting Norwegian parenting logic, but ultimately accepted the new way of doing to a certain degree. An emphasis on values such as respect, discipline, the 'position of children in families', high educational attainment and religion are persistent hurdles affecting the pace of learning and or unlearning (as is necessary) for the mothers. Like the findings demonstrate, previous studies (e.g. Lim and Lim, 2003; Lim et al., 2008) have also echoed that intergenerational conflicts are imminent in such cross-cultural environment as children are more keen on adapting Norwegian values than are parents. Muslim girls in particular are met with serious challenges fitting in to the secular value system that Norway epitomizes. An explanation for this might be that there is an inculcated fear that 'girls have more to lose' and as such, ought to be more sheltered than boys. Therefore, adaptation is a higher climb for the Muslim community, more so for females. Another contention facing this community is due to the negative connotation that glooms practices such as wearing the hijab (Eriksen, 2013) or leaving the family home before marriage.

What are parents' views on how culturally sensitive the Norwegian system is in accommodating their parenting behaviors?

This question was answered through inferences made by the research participants on the degree of cultural shedding that was necessary for them to satisfactorily be regarded as a '*competent*' Norwegian parents. The statement '*difference does not necessarily mean wrong*' was a resounding expression reflective of this reality for the participants. In general terms, parents described the Norwegian system as rigid with instituted 'family policing' institutions designated with the primary task of being vigilant to their parenting capacities, while ignoring the cultural differences that somewhat influence their parenting habits. The most frequently mentioned institution was the 'barnevernet'. It resonated substantively with the participants as an institution to be feared if parents cannot meet up to their standards. As one mother asserted "*their conclusions are so deadly that they tear families apart*". Thus, most of the respondents dread having their families intervened by this institution. Dahlstedt (2009) does purport that in such cultural contexts, there is an attitude of 'deficit' that is used to judge immigrant parents. Likewise, (Kritz and Skiveness, 2010, 2010b) found Norwegian child welfare workers to be 'cultural instructors' as opposed a more culturally sensitive 'cultural learner' approach embarked on by other countries such as England.

5.7 An Interpretive Framework of the Main Findings

After listening to the narrative by the mothers and interpreting primary themes within a theoretical framework, I designed a graphical interpretive framework that explains simply, the imperatives that resonate in the inter-cultural interface underlining the acculturation process. This model does not recognize immigrants as a homogenous group; but instead seeks to highlight universalities in the experience of immigrant parenting.

The Norwegian child is socialized to be a competent, autonomous, robust and self-reliant individual. Additionally, the societal construct epitomizes a permeable entity where access to the family is not restricted. In order for minority parents to grasp and adapt to this ideology, cultural shedding and cultural learning are imminent. The extent of the adaptation is however influenced by sociocultural heritage embedded in the ethnic identity of the parent. This further points to the cultural distance which determines the volume of cultural shedding that parents must achieve in

order to have a resemblance with native Norwegian parents. Accepting children as the competent, autonomous beings that ethnic Norwegian parents endeavor to nurture, influences an appreciation for a culture of negotiation; while this learning is reciprocated by influencing cultural shedding and cultural learning. Thus, the model reflects a continuous process of learning and unlearning for ethnic minority parents. This model also indicates a good fit between the theoretical frameworks applied to understanding the particularities of the research question.

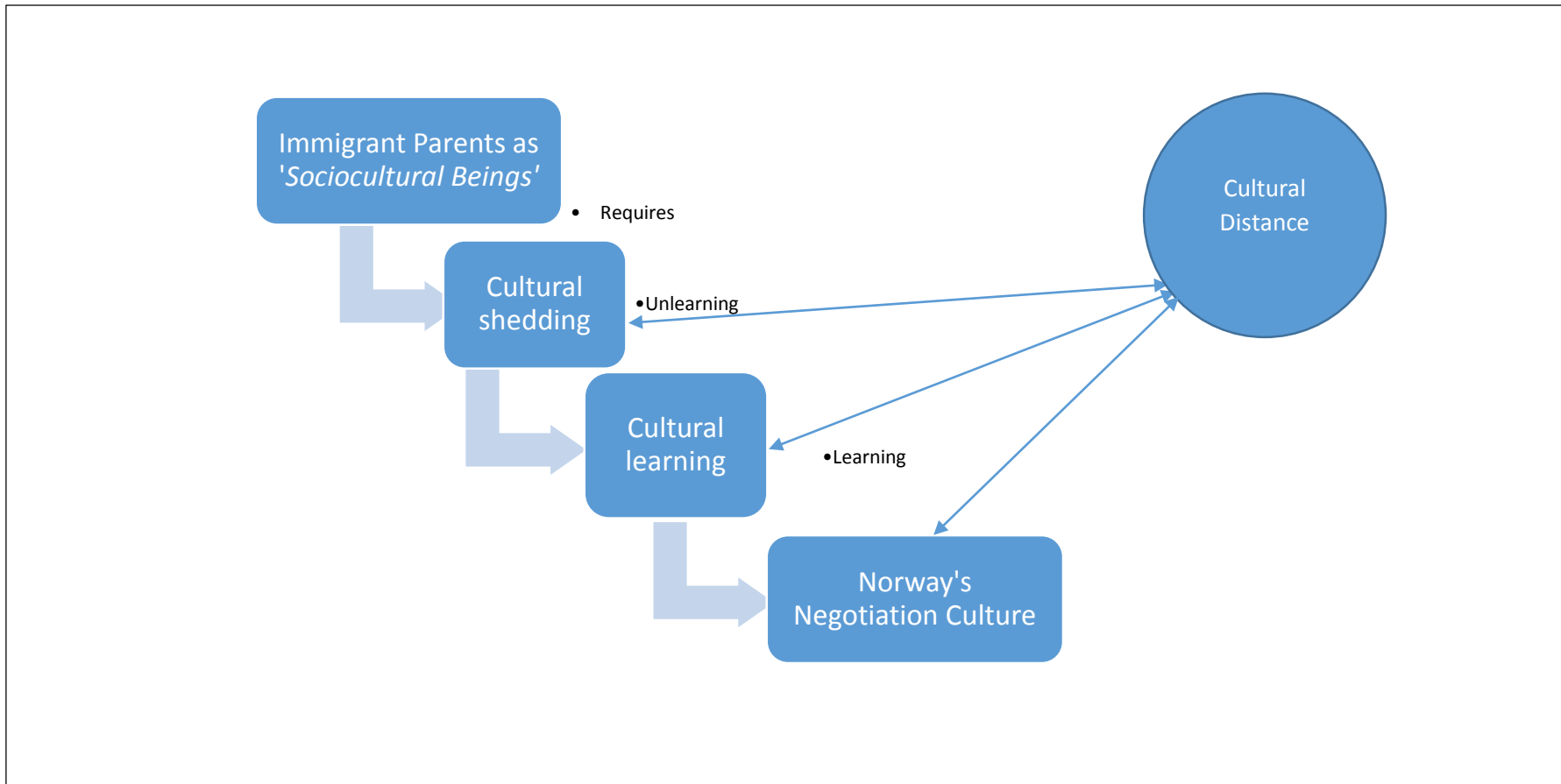


Figure 6: Acculturative imperatives influential in facilitating immigrant parents' adaptation process to the Norwegian negotiation culture (Jones, 2015)

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The main question of the research sought to explore the experience of parenting in the Norwegian context from the perspective of migrant mothers. The study was framed within an intercultural context, with participants taking a comparative approach to decipher between their way of ‘doing parenting’ in the backdrop of a predominant Norwegian ideal. A primary objective was to identify possible ‘universalities’ regarding the way that immigrant parenting is experienced, irrespective of sociocultural, religious or ethnic differences. Three auxiliary questions were proposed in support of the primary question:

- How does the understanding of a ‘Nordic’ socialization of childhood coincides with or differs from parent’s traditional way of ‘doing’ parenting?
- How do parents cope with the acculturation process necessary for ‘learning’ and ‘unlearning’ parenting practices?
- What are parents’ views on how culturally sensitive the Norwegian system is in accommodating their parenting behaviors?

In this thesis, I used a thematic narrative analytical frame coupled with a theoretical lens to explicate the substantive findings of the study. I also indicated how the substantive themes are explained and validated by the overarching research questions that scaffold the data collecting instrument. The analysis expounded on the cultural variations among the ethnic minority population and how they contrast with the ‘culture of negotiation’ that primarily defines Norwegian parenting. Issues of cultural distance, cultural clashes, ethnic identity and adaptation came to the fore. Two respondents each of Tunisian, Somalian, Polish and Nigerian descent took part in the study, were of varying socio-economic and religious backgrounds, and had between two and twelve children. In this chapter, I offer a reflection on some key findings as well as propose prospective strategies that may be useful in addressing the items discussed.

6.1 Reflection and Concluding Remarks

An observation that stood out during the discussions, is what I would consider a ‘second hand experience of Norwegianess’. I admit that participants varied in their degree of integration into the Norwegian society, which could partly explained by their length of stay in the country. However, whilst ‘detailed’ accounts of events were shared, some participants took reference from ‘stories’ shared colleagues, especially regarding the CWS. Additionally, the ‘Norwegian façade’ that is brandished in public to appear ‘well integrated’ is often exchanged for the ‘real face’ once out of the public’s eyes. One mother explained that though the family blends in as a ‘typical’ Norwegian family in public, at home her culture of origin dominates the family’s practices. This situation indicates that the immigrant parents try to go above and beyond to be appeasing, as they fathom that cultural hybridity is not necessarily embraced outside the confines of their home. The realization is indicative of the rigid environment which they consider to be surveying their abilities to be ‘Norwegian enough’. Such a reality begs one to question how children caught in such

precariousness are able to normalize their situation. Resulting, the onus is on the relevant authorities and ethnic minority communities alike to find a common ground for negotiate terms of mutual understanding. It is obvious that efforts are already being made from both ends; however, there are many gaps which need to be filled. For example, there is a high level of unawareness on both sides. Many of the participants were of the opinion that their way of being were not understood by the wider society. The same can be said for the immigrant community with the responsibility of CWS for example. There is an issue making the disparity between child protection and child welfare, especially for individuals holding the view that the intervention of this institution is warranted only to protect children from 'bad parents'. Unknowing of the distinction, ethnic minority parents then feel 'targeted' by the institution.

The research found parenting in the Norwegian context as a momentous exercise that is intertwined in national identity, nation-state building; the welfare state and is enshrined by institutions who ensure that both the welfare and wellbeing of children and families are systematically protected. With a welfare state built on egalitarianism, 'sameness', and a humanization ethos, parenting habits-a product of nationalism, is cocooned in these fundamental principles (Sommer, et al., 2010; Sommer 1997; Gullestad, 1996). The point of my argument is to highlight difficulty to define the parameters of 'cultural sensitivity' in the traditional sense. While labels as 'cultural instructors' (Kritz and Skiveness, 2010, 2010b) used to tag Norwegian child protection workers, would point to cultural insensitivity or assimilationist, this needs to be deeply interrogated before conclusively agreeing on such label.

The parameters of cultural sensitiveness is rather paradoxical as one has also to be '*culturally sensitive*' to the country's focus on the fundamental values on which the society is built. Therefore, finding a common ground between migrants varied value systems and the Norwegian's will prove confrontational. In reflecting, allow me to borrow one of the respondent's rhetoric and ask, in this situation of acculturation, '*who determines what is right versus what is wrong and when did different become wrong*'? This issue is that cultural sensitivity is one of grave controversy as it challenges the nation's history of socio-political path-dependency with the nuance of a clash between unity and uniformity versus diversity and differences. At the same time, it also challenges the migrant population to synchronize their cultural ideals to resemble those of the new society. It is worthwhile to ponder: Is it wrong for the host country to 'teach' their way of being? Is it wrong for the migrant population to 'learn' how 'to do it'? However, what strategy to we use and where do we draw the line?

Norway proposes a universalistic demand for children's rights versus the demand for cultural diversity. Due to the short migration history, migrant families and children constitute a new addition to the cultural dynamic of the welfare system, challenging the system to adapt and reformulate programs and policies to reflect the acceptance of differences. However how easy is this transformation when you have a welfare system so heavily fueled by path dependency? At the center of this controversial debate is children, who are vulnerable to whatever decisions are made. Ultimately, all decisions regarding the wellbeing of children ought to be made with a principal focus on children's best interest. As trendsetters in policies surrounding child welfare and wellbeing, authorities might feel endowed with a responsibility to follow that path. However, what

is demanded in institutions such as CWS is a culture of negotiation that also facilitates dialogue between immigrant parents and workers so that decisions can be made through dialogue and mutually understanding as opposed to the top-down approach that seems to be currently employed. If we propose a culture of negotiation when addressing children, isn't this logic also transferrable to the migrant population? There is no doubt that this allows for smooth cultural exchanges and bi-directional learning; but primarily for the best interest of children to be arrived at on mutual grounds. As one parent alluded to "*the best interest for ethnic Norwegian children might not be the same for immigrant children*". And as Berry and colleagues reiterate, the attitude of the host culture significantly affects adaptation processes. Another research participant advises that dialogues in this scenarios, makes a world of difference to how end results are understood.

In concluding, *cultural sensitivity* presents a paradoxical challenge in defining 'the best interest' for children who are at the heart of the policies and programs centered on immigrant parenting. This is primarily due to the fact that Norwegian path-dependent values of egalitarianism, 'sameness' and the pervasiveness of the CRC on issues of child development, challenges the ability of child protection stakeholders to negotiation a position of mutual understanding with migrant parents.

6.2 A Way Forward?

The ethnic plural nature of the sample group used in this study provides some leverage to excavate the problems faced by the immigrant population and their experience of parenting in the Norwegian context. Based on the outcome of the study, the following suggestions are critical to be considered when chart 'the way forward' for issues related to ethnic minority parenting:

- Building a trusting relationship between CWS and immigrant families. There ought to be more confidence in such an institution which plays a pivotal role in shaping child development, parenting and policies regarding immigrant families. There is evidence that the institution of needs to take steps bridge the gap between its mandate and what the misconceptions of the immigrant community are. This can be achieved by taking collaborative partnerships with minority associations for dialogues to facilitate an exchange of cultural specificities especially regarding issues of parenting.
- Another avenue is taking collaborative partnerships with the school where the CWS can be a part of parent teachers meeting and offer information to the general parent population in respect to expectations of proper parenting and care for children. In this respect, migrant parents will not necessarily feel 'targeted' for being incompetent parents.
- Barnevernet should be encouraged to integrate the culture of negotiation when working with the migrant community to not only lessen to fear of the institution but also to address the issue of the overrepresentation of minority children in out-of-home-care.
- Researches could explore possible avenues to better reach and integrate the Muslim community into mainstream society. Perhaps special programs targeted at men who seemingly appear to be the gatekeepers in permitting the indulgence of women in the wider society.

- Finally, efforts could be made to add the subject of working with cultural differences to the curriculum of practitioners such as social workers, child protection workers, teachers and others who work intimately with the ethnic minority population.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Non-Plagiarism Declaration

I hereby declare that the Dissertation titled: ***Adaptation and Conformity-immigrant parent's feelings about parenting in Norway***, submitted to the Erasmus Mundus Master's Programme in Social Work with Families and Children:

- Has not been submitted to any other Institute/University/College
- Contains proper references and citations for other scholarly work
- Contains proper citation and references from my own prior scholarly work
- Has listed all citations in a list of references.

I am aware that violation of this code of conduct is regarded as an attempt to plagiarize, and will result in a failing grade (F) in the programme.

Date: 01/07/2015

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Appendix 2

Elise Kipperberg

Handelshøgskolen ved UiS Universitetet i Stavanger

Ullandhaug

4036 STAVANGER

Vår dato: 21.01.2015

Vår ref: 41358 / 3 / MB

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 22.12.2014. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

41358	<i>Adaptation and Conformity-Immigrant parents feelings about parenting in Norway</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>Universitetet i Stavanger, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
<i>Daglig ansvarlig</i>	<i>Elise Kipperberg</i>
<i>Student</i>	<i>Marshalee Jones</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 14.06.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Marianne Bøe

Kontaktperson: Marianne Bøe tlf: 55 58 25 83

Appendix 3

Requests to participate in the research project

Title: Adaptation and Conformity-Immigrant parent's reflections about parenting in Norway

Topic: 'How do immigrant mothers experience parenting in relation to their perception of a Norwegian standard of parenting?'

Background and Purpose

This study is the culminating thesis of a master's program: Erasmus Mundus European Masters in Social Work with Families and Children climaxing at the University of Stavanger. This research will be undertaken by Marshalee Jones and supervised by university lecturer, Elise Kipperberg. The research project is due to be completed by July 1, 2015. The main aim of the study is to ascertain the learning and/unlearning processes involved as immigrant parents become acclimatized to the Norwegian standard of 'doing parenting'.

Your involvement in this activity is simply to share your understanding of how similar/different parenting in Norway has been, in comparison to the way that you are accustomed to back home. Feel confident that you will not be required to share any personal details about yourself or your family. This study promises to maintain confidentiality as well as anonymity and for that reason, your real names will not be used in the final results.

What does participation in the project imply?

This study will be qualitative in nature. The data collection tool that will be used in gathering information for the project is semi-structured interviews. Participants will be asked to offer no more than two hours of your time to have a dialogue with the interviewer. During this interview, you will be asked some questions relating to how you think that you fit in as a 'Norwegian parent', what makes you think that you are similar or different in your parenting style etc.? No files, record, personal number or any other personal identification will be necessary and all collected data will be treated confidentially.

What will happen to the information about you?

Apart from the interviewer, the project supervisor will be the only person who has access to this data after it has been transcribed. The discussion will be recorded just to ensure that the interviewer has accurately documented the answers. After the information has been transcribed, the recording will be destroyed and the written data will be stored on a computer accessible only by the interviewer and which is secured with a username and password.

None of the participants will be recognizable by the public.

Voluntary Participation

It is voluntary to participate in the study, and you may at any time withdraw your consent without giving any reason. If you withdraw, all information about you be anonymous.

The study is reported to the Privacy Ombudsman for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services AS.

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the study, and are willing to participate

(Signed by the project participant, date)

Student's Name: Marshalee Jones

Supervisor's Name: Elise Kipperberg

Contact Details: marshaleejones@hotmail.com

Contact Details: elise.kipperberg@uis.no

Appendix 4

Interview Guide

Topic: Adaptation and Conformity-Immigrant parent's reflections about parenting in Norway.

Research Question: How do immigrant mothers experience parenting in relation to their perception of a Norwegian standard of parenting?

Demographic Information

1. How long have you been living in Norway?
2. What is your nationality?
3. How many children do you have?
4. Were they all conceived and raised here?

How do parents perceive doing parenting from a Norwegian standpoint and cope with the processes of 'learning' and 'unlearning' parenting practices?

5. How accurate do you think is the idea of a 'Norwegian style of parenting'?
 - Explain how this might be similar or different to the way of parenting in your country of origin.
6. What would you say is the biggest change that you've had to make to fit more into the Norwegian way of parenting?

Explore further:

- How easy/difficult was it for you to make such adjustments?
- Where there any challenges that you faced doing so how did you deal with it?
- How did you feel about having to make this decision?
- Why was it necessary to make this adjustment?
- How has this change altered your way parenting as compared to the natural or customary way your home country?

Understanding the idea of a 'Nordic' socialization of childhood

7. How are children viewed and treated in your country of origin in comparison to what you are accustomed to here in Norway?

Comment on issues such as

- Individuality
- Autonomy
- Child participation

8. What agencies do you think is most influential to children in giving children the power that they hold in families?

Highlight:

- Schools
- Policies
- Media
- Friends

Views on the cultural sensitiveness of the Norwegian system in accommodating traditional parenting behaviors

9. What part of your cultural heritage has been most influential to you as a parent and the way that you raise your children?
 - How do you think this practice blends with the expected way of parenting here in Norway?
 - Are there any conflicting values and how do you deal with that issue?
10. What (if any) part of your cultural heritage would you like to be embraced by the Norwegian society in the way that parenting is viewed?
11. What part of your parenting capacities are you most satisfied with that has been influenced by the Norwegian way of parenting?
 - Is this something that you'd hope for your own culture to embrace?
 - Explain what benefits to you think this transferred practice might have for families and children?

Appendix 5

Braun and Clarke's 6-Steps Thematic Analysis Method

Step 2: Searching for initial codes:

We believe in correction, but I think most Norwegian parents do not have the same believe. They believe that the child should be allowed to do as the will; it's his choice, it's his rights, he can make a decision himself. But come on, who do we call a child, if a child is allowed to do everything he wants whether stupid or sensible? That is where I think the main difference comes in. So, it would be difficult for an immigrant who was brought up in a different way to accept that kind of way of life, especially for the children. Also, when it on comes to beating the child, many parents do not accept it. Certainly, the Norwegian system is strongly against it. However, occasionally, when a child needs to be disciplined, one needs to enforce discipline in other ways like time out, the naughty corner, or some other means. There is some who believe that the child should be beaten, I don't believe in that. Children are allowed to do whatever they want like staying out late and I'm not in agreement with that in any way. I think generally, its just cultural differences-we were brought up to respect our parents, we were brought up to help our parents. When I was young, I didn't watch my parents do things on their own and ignore helping. But here it is different; they kind of believe that you are stressing the child by putting them under some kind of label. That's why we see now-when the parents are old, the children do not see it as a responsibility to look for them, care for them and so forth. This does not happen where we come from. But, when a child was brought up to show help, and to show care, then they grow up with that belief as a way of life. It is sad how the old parents are lonely and even neglected by their children; nobody to show them love. Even on holidays when it should matter most, the children don't come around because they were not brought up that way. Loneliness breeds so many other diseases like depression, stress and other psychological defective illnesses. These are the things we see now in the developed countries because of how the children were brought up. At a certain age, children have this freedom of doing things.

Step 3: Searching for candidate themes

Code	Extract
Concerns about CWS	Natalia
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1). I'm really afraid sometimes because when you are even sitting at home, playing, laughing, we are naturally very loud but I'm thinking what the neighbors might think that we are screaming at the kids or something. We are all the time thinking about this barnevernet so it's really stressful for us. 2). Because everybody around is taking about this so with the kids you should not do this or do that, or else someone will call the Barnevernet. 3). But in Norway they don't do that; and I'm afraid to enforce my rules because of what Barnevernet might do. 4). I have a friend who was called by Barnevernet out of suspicion that they were using violence at home simply because the child was aggressive to a classmate. 5). I do it the way that my mom did it, but sometimes I think of this Barnevernet, that they might come to visit me, talk about something...I don't know.

	<p>6). I think that we think too much about this Barnevernet and we become too afraid.</p>
	<p>Wiktorja</p>
	<p>1). We know of a Norwegian institution and a lot of us are afraid to be stricter with our children because we run the risk of this institution coming to our family and questioning us or the children.</p> <p>2). We also read a lot about different scenarios where this institution can intervene in your family. We were afraid and even though we would prefer to raise our children the way we like, it was difficult. I think that it is difficult for a lot of Polish and immigrant families because we all know of barnevern and how they work.</p>
	<p>Kemi</p>
	<p>1). There are cases where we hear that this institution: barnevernet-took over the care of the child, for reasons such as a child saying that they want to move out, this needs more detailed assessment in my opinion.</p> <p>2). There is so much more that is left neglected when the act without doing the thorough assessment that is required. It needs to be assessed, it needs to be assessed!</p>
	<p>Rose</p>
	<p>1). I think that barnevern as an institution should be very slow at removing children from the home, yet active in following up...coming quickly to investigate and inform the family that 'this is what we've noticed' etc. Instead of being so quick to 'rescue the child' they should try to help the parents to sort out whatever the situation is</p>
	<p>Ayana</p>
	<p>1). I think there is a fear between barnevernet and us.</p> <p>2). Barnevernet has a bad reputation-when you come to Norway you hear horrible stories about how they just take the children with very little explanation why</p>
	<p>Califa</p>
	<p>1). I think the negativity comes from the fact that 'they take my child, how can they take my child?'</p> <p>2). But I think it's so dramatic to just go there with the police and then you're gonna get people that hate you, people pasting things like 'look what child services in Norway does'. It should be done in quite way. Maybe there are people working at the child services without enough education or experience, some of them don't even have a child-they don't know how parenting should be so they only know what the book says. Then it gets hard to handle a case when you don't have the experience.</p>

Step 5: Refining and defining themes

