



Being an immigrant mother in Norway  
“A study of immigrant mothers’ experiences of  
their life-worlds and perceptions of Child  
Welfare Services”

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University of Stavanger, June, 2016

32, 254 words



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# Abstract

## **Title: Being an immigrant mother in Norway**

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**Keywords:** mothering, immigrant, Norway, Barnevernet, Child Welfare Services

The aim of the research was to explore the meanings that Romanian immigrant mothers in Norway give to their life-worlds. It sought to understand the experiences that frame the mothers' opinions of welfare institutions, in particular Child Welfare Services (Barnevernet: in Norwegian). This was done in order to get knowledge of how their opinions affect their lives and that of their children.

Influenced by the phenomenological tradition and adopting the ethnographic method, data were collected through semi-structured narrative interviews and participant observation. The sample was composed by four Romanian mothers who live in Stavanger and Sandnes. The researcher previous relationship with two of them, and her insider-outsider position were one of the strengths of the study due to the rich data that this made possible to collect. The exploration was framed by the perspectives of acculturation, intersectionality, social capital and post-structural feminism.

Data revealed different acculturation strategies and conceptualizations of children and socializing agents among the sample. Two of the mothers were found to embrace a separation strategy, which was characterized by maintaining their own culture and separating from the host society. Among the effects of separation were stress, isolation and distancing their children from Norway. Those who adopted an integration and/or assimilationist strategy shared values and meanings with the Norwegian socializing agents. Regardless of the acculturation strategy, distrust in welfare institutions and perceptions of discrimination were present.

The study concluded that by getting closer to users, it would be possible to get an understanding of their opinion forming processes of welfare institutions. Making their voices visible is necessary for professionals, academics and policymakers to understand the fears and distrust that are leading to the isolation and psychological problems of these families.

## Acknowledgements

Conducting this research has been a rewarding process that put an end to the two exciting years of the Erasmus Mundus Social Work Masters' programme. During these months, I have learned a lot from myself and from all the people that have made this project possible.

Firstly, I am very thankful to all the participants who let me be part of their routines and lives. They welcomed me in their homes and let me into their intimate world. I feel grateful because they shared with me their personal dreams, fears and goals, and mostly because of the kind, generous and warm way they did so.

After these months, I can only feel admiration and be very thankful to my supervisor Åse Vagli. Her dedicated supervision, her thought-provoking feedbacks, her critiques and advice have been very valuable. I am grateful to her support, but mostly for her attitude and building a beautiful relationship based on learning with me.

A big thanks to Maria, whose help with the informants' recruitment was crucial, and to Ahmad, whose support was encouraging and comforting.

Writing a dissertation while living and working in a foreign country is challenging. Feelings of happiness and fulfilment come with moments of stress and anxiety. Luckily, friends relieve all these emotions. Thanks to Maria Gomes, because she made me feel her supported and loved, in spite of living in another country. Thanks to Natalia, whose sense of humour and reflections were very supportive, and to Germán who took care of me and reminded me about my own strength, focus and capabilities.

## Dedication

To all mothers. They have the power to make the miracle of life, and their love and support have no limits nor conditions.

In particular to my cousin, who gave birth on the same day this thesis was completed.

# Chapter One: Introduction

## Researcher interest

I have always been interested in getting to know more about how Social Work practice is perceived by users. In particular, regarding child welfare, I have been enthusiastic about listening to families to understand how they see an institution that promotes children's wellbeing and that, at the same time, controls parents' parenting practices to raise their children. Child Welfare Services (CWS: Barnevernet) is an institution that safeguards children's wellbeing. As researchers in the field of CWS have pointed out, the promotion of children welfare is based on a certain conceptualization of what a good childhood is like and the factors that put it at risk (Parton, 1991). These social constructs reflect the taken-for-granted ideas that are rooted in a culture and standardized by institutions and policies (Vagli, 2009).

This taken-for-grantedness within parenting practices become more apparent for those parents with an ethnic minority background, who experience collision of these two worlds: their origin culture and the host society's culture. How do these parents experience parenting in a context of mobility and cultural clash? Do they feel supported by CWS in the performance of their parental responsibilities? Do they see social workers as a threat that represent the political, academic and professional discourses that have set certain parenting practices based on the taken-for granted values of the host society?

My curiosity in how immigrant parents give meaning to their experiences and to the role and intervention of welfare institutions in the society they have moved to, became greater last summer when I worked in Norway with Romanian mothers. CWS was a topic of great interest among my co-workers who shared the stories they had heard about immigrant families whose children have been removed with no reason according to them. I perceived that the mothers were afraid and felt victims of an apparatus that was seen as a threat. Their talks about families who left because they were so scared of the CWS, or the stories about the circumstances that Barnevernet could use to justify out-of-home measures, motivated my desires for further ethnographic observation. I became curious about getting closer to them in order to get knowledge about their culture, the reasons that motivated their migration, how they give meaning to mothering and to their experience as Romanian migrants living in Scandinavia, all in all, about researching this group at the micro-level to be able to understand the way they perceive the CWS.

After having understood that their perceptions of the CWS affect their lives, I became interested in exploring the challenges that they face in the meeting of two worlds: their conceptualization of "good mothering" and their perceptions of what the CWS expects as "good mothering". I realized that this scenario of cultural diversity could be challenging for the Welfare State that promotes a quality of life based on certain values rooted in a specific culture. Do these mothers share these values and idea of good life? Are the parenting practices used or expected in both countries culturally different? Do mothers trust the institutions to achieve that ideal? Where do the stories against the CWS come from? Why do mothers believe in them? Is Barnevernet culturally insensitive?

This research expects to contribute to the exploration of those questions to bring light to the current scenario and build bridges to promote the communication between the CWS and immigrant families. Improving Social Work practice requires listening to the users and reflect on how we-professionals and academics-think about our own thinking.



## Background

Immigration is a worldwide phenomenon that involves millions of people (UN, 2015). In the Romanian case, emigration is recent because leaving the country was not possible under the communist regime.

After the fall of communism in 1989, Romania developed a welfare regime differently from the old EU, regarding economic indicators and social policies. The Romanian regime has been characterized by low social security benefits, liberalization of social policy and insurance-based schemes. It has also been distinguished by corruption and inequalities (Vannhuysee, 2009). This scenario led to rates of unemployment and poverty among the highest in Europe (The World Bank, 2013), which supposed an increment of the mobility.

In 2007 the country joined the European Union, so Romanians had the right to work in certain member states of the European Union or Economic Area like Norway. The Romanian immigration has kept on growing with a first wave of young highly skilled workers, followed by a second characterized by low skilled workers (Boboc, et al., 2014).

On the other hand, Norway has been a country known for democracy, equality and tolerance. These values are promoted by the Norwegian Welfare State, which shares characteristics with the Nordic Welfare model. The Norwegian state is given high responsibilities for the provision of welfare based on the idea of socializing the costs of family-hood (Esping Andersen, 1990) and achieving equality. Universalism, equality and de-commodification are characteristics of a model that has been stated to be based on high levels of trust (Fukuyama, 1995).

In the last decades, the discovery of the oil and the adhesion to the Schengen zone have transformed Norway into a pluralistic society. This has been due to the arrival of an ethnically diverse number of immigrants. The Stavanger region is located in the south west of Norway and considered the European oil capital. It presents a larger proportion of immigrants than the national average, who are attracted by the economic prosperity (Council of Europe, 2014).

The first inflow of immigrants coming from non-western countries were followed by family reunifications, asylum seekers, refugees and labour immigration from countries that became part of the European Union. This supposed the meeting between the Norwegian culture, Welfare State and a society, with a variety of groups with different backgrounds and contexts. A Welfare State regime involves state responsibility for securing citizens' welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990: 1), so it lies on a certain conceptualization of welfare that hopes to be achieved by policies and the work of institutions.

In view of a significant transformation in the population, the Norwegian Welfare State regime could be facing new challenges due to the clash in individuals' experiences of their life-worlds. There are different conceptualizations of what a good life is and how the balance between families-market-state should be handled to achieve it. This clash, together with the transnational communication processes and the interaction of different actors and voices, make more complex the current scenario and the forming opinion processes of the institutions' role and intervention.

## Research questions

Cultures provide societies with meanings to experience their life-worlds. In this regard, parenting and childhood are culturally shaped conceptualizations. A society gives meaning to those according to its own values and how it perceives itself (Hollekim, Anderssen and Daniel, 2015). It standardizes particular parenting practices rooted in certain values and culture through the figure of the CWS.

Reflecting on that, I would like to examine the challenges mothers who come from other contexts with other culture, values and Welfare State regimes, face when they arrive in Norway. Especially, the way they experience the process of acculturation in relation to their mothering practices and the emotions that come up due to the cultural adaptation or maintenance. I would like to study the acculturation approach they take based on their experiences and perceptions of the Norwegian society. This exploration would provide a context to understand their opinions about the welfare institutions that work with families in the society of settlement. My purpose is to explore their trust in the institutions to ease their family responsibilities, or their distrust in an apparatus that cluster parents as competent or deficient, depending on how well they fit in the established standard parenting practices.

The primary research question seeks to find out: "How do immigrant mothers from Romania give meaning to their life-worlds within a context of mobility?"

The supporting questions are:

- How do immigrant mothers experience mothering with regards the acculturation process?
- What are the narratives immigrant mothers construct about welfare institutions that work with families in Norway?
- What is the main source of immigrant mothers' knowledge about issues relating to CWS intervention?
- How do these perceptions affect the way children of immigrant mothers access welfare resources and services?

## Aims and objectives

The main purpose of the research is to explore how immigrant mothers give meaning to their life-worlds or intersubjective experiences (Husserl, 1954), with regards to mothering within their migration experience. In addition to that, the study aims to explore the meanings these mothers give to the figure of welfare institutions that support families with services, but also standardize normative parenting practices. By listening to their narratives and observing at the micro-level, the acculturation process and power issues will be explored to seek knowledge of how these mothers experience mothering in the described context. The objectives of the research are as follows:

- To explore immigrant mothers' give-meaning processes to their life-worlds within a context of mobility.
- To seek knowledge of immigrant mothers' perceptions of welfare institutions, especially CWS. To try to understand the factors that have influenced their perceptions.
- To get an understanding of the effect that immigrant mothers' perceptions of CWS has on their lives, their mothering practices and their children access to resources.

- To explore the acculturation approaches these mothers adopt and the challenges they face in this process.
- To seek knowledge of how immigrant mothers position themselves within the Welfare State system in terms of power and oppression.

These are in line with the objectives of the European Master in Social Work with Families and Children. This program aims to promote “students’ analytic expertise in relation to vulnerable children and the situation of marginalized families”. (Retrieved from <http://mfamily.iscte-iul.pt/index.php/objectives-and-learning-outcomes>). The research pretends to explore users’ perspectives within different cultures, practices and contexts as the Master does.

## Significance of the study

Social Work recognizes users’ perspectives as a meaningful tool to gain a deeper understanding on our conceptualizations of children and parenting. This knowledge is worthy for professionals, families, children and policymakers (Hollwekim et al., 2015), because good quality services require an understanding of how users experience their lifeworlds and perceive professional practice.

As Studsrod, Willumsen and Ellingsen (2012) stated, parents’ opinions would bring a needed understanding of how the CWS are perceived. These perceptions impact the establishment of the professional relationship, so listening to families is crucial for the CWS in order to improve its services. Especially with regards to immigrant families that embrace different cultural values and face specific challenges, researches on their views towards Social Work are demanded.

The study aims to contribute to the production of knowledge in the field of Social Work with families and children, as well as to the reflection on professional practice for its improvement. It is also significant due to the current gap in literature written in English on immigrant parents’ perceptions of Barnevernet. There are some PhD thesis on the meeting between the CWS and ethnic minorities families. However, researches’ focus has been on the professionals and cultural competence. In this sense, the study pretends to contribute to fill some of the knowledge gap in research on users with ethnic minority background’s perspectives.

## Chapter two: Literature review

### The Norwegian context

#### *Social Democratic Welfare State Regime*

Norway represents a Nordic Welfare State type (Esping Andersen, 1990), a typology also called institutional model because it is characterized by the institutionalization of a great range of areas within society, market and family, high levels of de commodification and universalism.

As Kangas and Kvist showed (2013), the position given to the state as main provider of goods and services is based on some premises rooted in the Nordic culture. For instance, in the Nordic countries, even linguistically, “society” and “state” have not defined boundaries and both terms can be used as synonymous. Behind this model, there is an idea on the conceptualization of the “state” as a figure that should maximize individual independence and potential because this is good for individuals and the whole society.

Thus, it is not the individual interest which is prioritized but the common good, and the state is responsible for that. Families trust the state to achieve higher levels of welfare, they see public policies cost-effective in the way that ease childbearing, promotes gender equality and economic development (Esping Andersen, 2009). By equalizing childhood conditions and investing in children, the state equalizes outcomes in education and income. It takes directly the responsibility of care in order to maximize individual independence, instead of maximizing family dependence.

This model is also known as Social Democratic because of the political forces that set it (ibid.). Civic rights typical of democratic nations such as participation, are core values of this regime. For instance, citizen’s right to complain about professional treatment or policies in a wide range of arenas could be an example of a system that has institutionalized advocacy towards civil society by the creation of ombudsmen (Means, 1968). Children count on this system (Hollekim, et al., 2016) that safeguards their right to participate since 1981.

#### *Trust*

The Social Democratic regime has been claimed to be rooted in a Scandinavian cultural characteristic which is the high level of trust in the society (Fukuyama, 1995). For this model to work, citizens are required to trust the state as well as each other to achieve the common goal of community welfare.

The level of trust has been identified as a characteristic that leads to a universal regime, because this model needs higher taxes to finance a larger Welfare State. A society that relies on the state instead of the market or family as a provider of goods and services, requires more funds and a common rule of respect which translates into everybody working and not taking advantage of the policies (Bergh and Bjørnskov, 2011). In other words, citizens need to work to contribute with taxes that support the system. Moreover, they should trust institutions and the rest of the community in their participation with the system for the achievement of the common welfare.

This model needs citizens to trust the public sector, institutions and policies to watch over the common good. Simultaneously, bureaucrats and institutions are responsible for developing and

administering public policies and services. In order for this to be successful, citizens need to trust their professionalism and demand transparency. This can be seen in the case of the CWS, as reporting suspect of maltreatment is a social mandate sanctioned by law and a prerequisite for this institution to protect children. Children's wellbeing, is therefore, a societal and public responsibility.

## The Norwegian Child Welfare Services

The Norwegian CWS is a public institution characterized by family sensitive and a therapeutic approach (Skivenes, 2011). It acknowledges the state's involvement in family life (Leira 2008 cited in Hollekim, et al., 2015), based on the assumption that children's protection and wellbeing are a societal responsibility. Children are individuals with rights and the state is responsible for their protection, welfare and equal opportunities. With its integration into the Welfare State through the Child Welfare Act (CWA, 1992), the CWS is consolidated as a universal system that recognizes children as individuals with their own rights, but also part of a family (Skivenes, 2011).

Social workers guided their decision-making process by the best interest, stability, biological and least intrusive intervention principles (ibid.). As far as interventions are concerned, due to its family therapeutic approach, the Norwegian CWS are mostly in-home services whereas most of out-of-home interventions are in foster-homes (ibid.).

## CWS and immigrant families

### *Challenges in the professional relationship*

According to Dyrhaug and Sky (2015), immigrant children are 2.7 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than Norwegians. This overrepresentation has been addressed by researches (De Boer and Coady, 2006) that have shown the challenges within the professional relationship that will have an effect on the CWS intervention.

Ethnic minority families can feel afraid of the CWS as a public system due to their previous experiences with agencies that represented government authority (Kriz, et al., 2011). Instead of seeing the CWS as a system to help them, they see it as a controlling institution. This distrust leads to their isolation and avoidance of assistance and cooperation. These circumstances can be understood as a vicious-circle in which immigrant families are struggling with providing a secure environment for their children. The stressors that immigrant parents can face, as few social networks, poor working conditions and stress, can be seen as risk factors by the CWS.

Researches (Kriz and Skivenes, 2010; Ylvisaker, Rugkåsa and Ketil, 2015) showed that there are differences in the challenges that workers identify in working with minority ethnic families. Kriz and Skivenes' comparative study on Norway and UK (2010) concluded that Norwegian workers identified parenting approaches, culture, language barrier and lack of system knowledge as the main challenges. It is very important how workers conceptualize users because in a process of simplifying their jobs, they cluster and treat them accordingly (ibid.). This can be more complex working with immigrant users, because the categories emerging are more diverse.

### *Professionals' perceptions*

The Norwegian CWS works with a change-oriented approach that identifies challenges at the individual level. The focus is on children instead of families, and the promotion of their opportunities for social inclusion and equality (Kris and Skivenes, 2010).

A child-centred approach can be opposed to collectivistic values of cultures that see the child as part of a larger community. This approach held by workers is shown in Kriz and Skivenes' research (2010) in which Norwegian workers reflected on the consequences of the identified challenges only on the children, not on the families. Workers are thought to believe in parents' capabilities to face the challenges, but children are seen the reason why parents should overcome them (ibid.). Other factors and agents that play a role in the wider picture are, therefore, not being considered such as the Norwegian society and racism. As Berry (2005) mentioned, host society approaches towards immigration affect the acculturation processes. However, Kris and Skivenes (2010: 15) concluded that the whole Norwegian society is not seen as a factor that affects immigrant children's integration or immigrant families' wellbeing by workers. This has been explained referring to how the Norwegian Welfare State regime gives value to sameness, so the focus is on equality instead of pluralism.

Regarding discrimination, the Norwegian State has been claimed to see itself as a system to fight against the discrimination that individuals suffer from family members rooted in their culture (Council of Europe, 2009 cited in Kriz and Skivenes, 2010: 15). Nevertheless, as Hollekim et al. (2015) showed, discrimination is seen differently by actors. Immigrant children are seen as victims of discrimination because they cannot have the same opportunities than Norwegians due to their parents' culture. However, immigrant parents feel discriminated because of the CWS being culturally insensitive.

### *Parents' perceptions*

The way parents experience the CWS intervention depends on different factors such as the referral and their preconceptions and previous experiences with the system (Studsrod, et al., 2012:314).

Their opinions and emotions are influenced by their relationships with others and the social context. According to Studsrod et al. (2012), parents show fear because the CWS has the double function of protection and control. They feel powerless because they are submitted to the powerful legal and institutional apparatus that dominates the discourse. This is a paradox for workers too, as they work with families but are in a more powerful position.

Studies on parents within the ethnic majority group showed that emotions are very important during the intervention (Thrana, H., and Fauske, H., 2014). They revealed that the stigma attached to being helped from the CWS can make the intervention difficult. Emotions are affected by how the system is perceived in terms of trust and security. The challenges parents face, together with their preconceptions about the CWS, can lead to the isolation and marginalization of these families.

## Chapter three: Theoretical framework

Although there are several theories that could have been helpful in explaining the phenomenon explored, I selected the theories below because I considered that they provide a focus on immigrant mothers' perspectives.

### Intersectional theory

This sociological framework assesses the research topic from the multiplicity of dimensions within the social relations and personal identities. It is relevant for the research because I understand social reality as contextually dependent, in the same way as Haraway (1988) did. Therefore, not only did I see crucial to collect data from the field itself, but also to analyse it through the lenses of the intersectional theory in order to explore the different cultural and identity categories that interact in the findings.

Intersectionality was introduced by Crenshaw in 1989 when she analysed the marginalization of black women through antiracist and feminist theories. It brings the possibility to widen the range of understandings, showing the connections and structures within the experiences of discrimination or oppression (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays and Tomlinson, 2013). The sample is composed by immigrant mothers, so there are two categories emerging that require consideration: gender and ethnicity. These were analysed in relation to the power and oppression of systems and structures, through post-structural feminist and acculturation theories. Social capital theory served to explore the networks that these mothers have built, the level of trust and reciprocity in them.

I have been influenced by Kondo (1990) and her multi-voice analysis of power, gender and identity. The fragmentation of the self makes the researcher indicate the differences between cultures and aspects of identities. Intersectionality acknowledges the overlapping social identities and systems of oppression by applying different theories as lenses to analyse the phenomenon through. By using different theories, not only did I seek to validate the findings but to get a richer understanding of them (Hesse-Biber, 2012). This allowed me to explore the complexities of the data, and to show the patterns in the understanding of the phenomenon and how differences complement each other.

### Acculturation theory

#### *Acculturation approaches*

A direct consequence of the phenomenon of immigration is acculturation. According to Berry (2005: 2), acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their members. It involves the society of origin and the host society or society of settlement (Berry, 2005). This adaptation between both groups can take different forms which are determined by the relationship between two aspects. On the one hand, a preference for maintaining one's culture, on the other, a preference for having contact with the larger society (Berry, 2005:8).

The way individuals handle this balance depends on different factors such as origin and host society's culture, voluntariness of migration and policies. Another factor is the perception of discrimination. As Berry, et al. pointed out, individuals who perceived dislike by the other group are most likely to reject inter-group involvement and are more oriented to their own group, or confused about their cultural identity (2006: 24).

As a result of the handle of this balance, individuals adopt four approaches. There are individuals who prefer not to keep their culture and interact with others instead (assimilation). Those who prefer to maintain their cultural identity and interact with other cultures take the integration strategy. Individuals who wish to keep their culture of origin and keep away from the interaction with others represent the separation approach, while those who avoid maintaining their own culture as well as contacting other groups, adopt marginalization (Sam and Berry, 2010). The host society, through the public and policies, can adopt four different approaches towards immigration. These are multiculturalism (integration), melting-pot (assimilation), segregation (separation) or exclusion (marginalization).

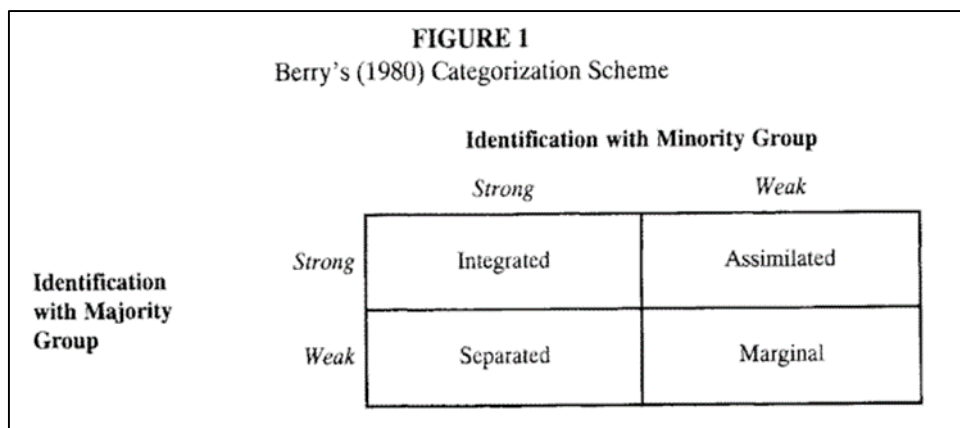


Figure 1. Acculturation Strategies. Categorization Scheme. From (Berry, 1980)

### *Acculturation approaches and wellbeing*

Cultures are dynamic and can be defined as “series of constantly contested and negotiated social practices whose meanings are influenced by the power and status of their interpreters and participants” (Rao, 1995: 173). Not only are individuals influenced by a new culture, but also by their own because of its changing nature. Depending on how the accommodation between maintaining one's culture and contacting the new one happens, there will be cultural and psychological outcomes at group and individual levels, such as stress or isolation.

According to Berry et al. (2006), women have better sociocultural adaptation but they are more likely to have psychological problems due to acculturation. For men, psychological adaptation is better, but they do worse in sociocultural. Their study (2006:23) concluded that the acculturation approach immigrants adopt is linked to how well they psychologically and socio-culturally adapt. Integration was found the approach that promotes better adaptation, while marginalization challenged it. Therefore, integration has been claimed to be the approach that promotes immigrant's wellbeing. Maintaining one's heritage at the same time than participating in the larger society make easier a positive adaptation.

As it was presented, the perceived discrimination from the host society and public policies and legislations, is a factor that determines the acculturation approach individuals adopt. Thus,



institutional change is needed to promote integration (Berry and Sam, 2006). Public institutions implement the legislation and policies, so in order to promote integration, these institutions should reflect inclusion in the way that immigrants feel represented.

## Social capital theory

Immigrant mothers' networks can affect their perceptions of welfare institutions and their experiences of their life-worlds in the host society. This theory would shed light on how national and transnational networks influence the opinions about the host society and its institutions.

### *The concept of social capital*

Social Capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity -owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu, 1986: 248-249)

Bourdieu's theory on social capital is based on the concepts of habitus, capitals and field. Habitus and field would be relevant for the research. Habitus is defined as "a set of durable, transposable dispositions which generates practices and perceptions" (Bourdieu, 1977: 72, cited in O'Brien and Ó Fathaig, 2005:68). Thus, it refers to the way society and culture influence individuals' perceptions and actions. It can be so subtle that individuals can be unaware of it. In this sense, the way mothers give meaning to their experiences is shaped by the sociocultural, economic and political contexts as well as social class. These factors not only frame their perceptions, but influence their attitudes towards institutions and their involvement with them. All in all, habitus refers to the taken-for-granted issues that the study seeks to explore.

Fields defines a system that influences the habitus of individuals and has its own rules and functioning. It is an important concept in the exploration of power, because those who know how the field works will have more capacity to change its rules. Those unaware of the rules are in a disadvantage position and can be considered to suffer from symbolic violence (O'Brien and Ó Fathaig, 2005).

### *Putman's bonding and bridging social capital*

Putman offers a typology of social capital very relevant for the study. According to him (2000), there is a bonding social capital when people socialize with similar people. Bridging capital, on the contrary, is typical of multi-ethnic societies and refers to the socialization among people who are different in terms of religion, sex, race, age, etc.

Putnam (2000), stated that bonding networks are necessary for "getting by" and bridging for "getting ahead". Immigrants face complex challenges and live under uncertainty and stress, so they will often look for social networks among people who live in the same situation and speak the same language. However, they will establish relationships with other networks to "get ahead", that is, to access resources and social mobility. This concept can bring light on how

immigrant mothers' networks affect their perceptions of the CWS and the spread of stories against this institution.

## Post-structural feminist theory

Post-structural feminist theory will be applied because issues of power, oppression and powerlessness will be explored. In this respect, feminism has pointed out that not only the economic, social and political structures have an impact on society, but gender is a factor to consider in the analysis of oppression and power (Turner and Maschi, 2015).

Post-structural feminism is a framework to explore gender by addressing its intersectionality with race, ethnicity, religion and class that impact a person's perspective (Crenshaw, 1991 cited in Turner and Maschi, 2015:154). Feminist theory is also relevant for Social Work because it shares basic assumptions with the strengths perspective. Especially with regards to partnership, feminist Social Work understands the relationship as a mean to promote empowerment and resilience (Turner, 2001 cited Turner and Maschi, 2015:152). During the research, I have understood method and theory as related. Therefore, post-structural feminism framed the data analysis and the methodology to collect the data. Doing narrative interviews was motivated by avoiding power imbalances and promoting a relationship in which interviewees felt subjects with agency, rather than objects with stories. With the post-structural feminist lenses I understood the stories as a tool by which identities may be crafted.

Among the great variety of feminist perspectives, post-structural feminism has been selected due to its emphasis on the multiplicity of identities. Gender is a category that has a crucial impact on issues of power and oppression, but I would like to avoid the binary thinking that is based on the patriarchal symbolic order (Kantambu, 1995). So, by acknowledging the multiplicity of perspectives, I would recognize and give value to the difference. Avoiding binary and linear thinking means that the context is acknowledged in the construction of the self. This also supposes also the liberation of the self, because the application of a theory does not limit identity to a certain categories. Feminist theory is also relevant for the research because it acknowledges the intersection of the private sphere and public issues (Miley and DuBois, 2007 cited in Turner and Machi, 2015: 155). Moreover, feminism acknowledges the intersection of the private sphere and public issues. This will be valuable in the exploration of individual experiences framed by several contexts. Also, to explore opinions about policies and institutions that work with families in issues that can be considered public, for instance, children's wellbeing.

### *Narrative identity*

In their narratives, informants construct their multiple selves (mother, immigrant, women, worker and wife) under the influence of the context and my own identity as a participant-observant. I have seen their narrative identities (Ricoeur, 1986 cited in Sands 1996:177), meaning the identity that they constructed in the stories. These contained cultural narratives about gender, ethnicity, age and class. I understood that informants crafted their identities through their experiences, so they constructed a story of themselves that gave meaning to their life-worlds. These narratives referred to past and present events and circumstances, and future expectations. Therefore, identity was understood as the components that a person uses to define him/herself, so the beliefs, values and categories that refers to an individual self-conception.

Narratives show again how theory and method are related. Not only are narratives a method, but also a theory that provides lenses to explore informants' identities and their constructions of their selves within their interaction with the researcher. In line with Kondo (1990), my purpose has been to explore how informants craft their identities and their lives within a context of mobility, cultural clash, changing fields of power and meanings within a particular historical and sociocultural context. Based on the research questions, it could be said that "identity" is a key concept for the study.

I have considered the exercise of story-telling as therapeutic, because informants are part of a group that is given few opportunities to express parts of themselves that have been hidden, for instance, how they position themselves in terms of power-oppression with regards to the host society and institutions. This exercise of uncovering their multiple identities can be seen as therapeutic (Sands, 1996) and liberating from the standardized meanings given to the phenomena, such as mothering and labour migration. The self is influenced by the dominant views that set the standards for an appropriate way of being. This dominant view has been established by those groups in a powerful position that enables them to construct discourse and mobilize technology (Foucault 1978 cited in Sands 1996:173). In the case of mothering practices, from a Foucauldian perspective it could be stated that the CWS is the system through which middle class taken-for-granted values are standardized.

### *Power in post-structural theory*

Post-structuralism is also the lens to analyse the power issues present in how informant position themselves within the Welfare State and the host society.

Regarding Social Work practice, professionals can be seen as mediators between political objectives and the object of intervention (Holmes, 2002). This can be interpreted as a power imbalance which can be an obstacle to establish a relationship of partnership. How social workers handle the balance between protection and participation can lead to paternalism that impossibilities empowerment.

From a post-structural theory, a multi-dimensional approach is adopted and power is understood as dynamic. Power is seen as a relationship that enables alliances between professionals and users in an inclusive, democratic and less authoritarian way (Tew, 2006). Binary thinking is avoided as it happened analysing gender through post-structural feminism. Based on the work of Tew (2006), power relations would be analysed using his framework.

This way of understanding power brings the chance for professionals to exercise power-over in a positive manner, so as to enable the protection of those who may be in a vulnerable position. It also focuses on power-together that is the basic principle to build a relationship of partnership and cooperation.

It identifies two power relations that are against recognizing users' strengths and empowering them. They are oppressive and collusive power and refer to the relations that suppress the difference, as well as, the unidirectional relations where "the others" are seen as a mean to get something.

	Power over	Power together
Productive modes of power	<b>Protective power</b> Deploying power in order to safeguard vulnerable people and their possibilities for advancement	<b>Co-operative power</b> Collective action, sharing, mutual support and challenge – through valuing commonality <i>and</i> difference
Limiting modes of power	<b>Oppressive power</b> Exploiting differences to enhance own position and resources at the expense of others	<b>Collusive power</b> Banding together to exclude or suppress 'otherness' whether internal or external

Figure 1 Matrix of power relations

Figure 2. Matrix of Power Relations. From (Tew, 2006)

Tew, Jerry (2006): "Understanding Power and Powerlessness: Towards a Framework for Emancipatory Practice in Social Work" in *Journal of Social Work* 6(1). pp 33-51. 18 p.

## Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter seeks to expose the methodological framework of the research, as well as, the epistemological tradition on which it has been based.

### Methodological approach

The research aims to explore immigrant mothers' giving-meaning processes to their life-worlds to get an understanding of their perceptions of welfare institutions. The main research question is: "How do immigrant mothers from Romania give meaning to their life-worlds within a context of mobility?" This research inquiry requires a qualitative design to cope with the intimate meanings the mothers give. In contrast to quantitative, qualitative research allows the "women's voices to be heard" (Bryman, 2012: 411). The study is not only qualitative, but its approach shares characteristics with Moustakas' psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994, cited in Creswell, 2006: 7) as it aims to explore how mothers give meaning to their experiences.

#### *Interpretative phenomenological research*

Phenomenology is a tradition related to the understanding of how individuals make sense of the world, and how the researcher should categorize preconceptions in the process of observing and interpreting this world (Bryman, 2012: 30). The process of categorizing was also referred by Husserl (1962) who coined it as "bracketing". The researcher should break-down and analyse the data avoiding being biased by theoretical concepts and preconceptions. Before conducting the research, I did an exercise of self-analysis to make explicit my background and own experiences with the phenomenon to study. I tried to go less biased to the field, or at least to do so by acknowledging my own lenses that would influence the way I look at the phenomenon, collect and analyse the data.

From a phenomenological tradition, the researcher's role is to go to the field and get access to people's understanding of their reality in order to interpret their actions and world from their positions. It differs from narrative studies because it describes the meaning that individuals give to their experiences of a phenomenon, instead of focusing on the life of a single individual (Creswell, 2006:57). With this regards, the purpose of the study is to make visible immigrants' mothers voices. The research is a case study that explores immigrant mothers' giving meaning to their experiences. It aims to explore their experiences that frame their opinions about welfare institutions, as well as the patterns in their constructions of narratives about these institutions.

Phenomenology was considered a philosophy applied to social sciences after the work of Schutz (1899-1959). He argued that social and natural sciences differ in the subject which makes necessary different epistemologies to base both sciences on (Bryman, 2012: 73). In concrete, social sciences are interested in people's meaning of their social world. Social scientists need to go to the field to interpret the social world from actors' views, based on the premise that human actions are meaningful, so people give meanings to their acts and others' acts. Therefore, the phenomenological tradition's basic premise is rooted in social constructivism, so it assumes that human consciousness constitutes the reality.

## *Ethnography*

Ethnography is an approach to explore the meaning that people give to their reality and social constructs. It is focused on the methods that individuals employ to generate meanings. The researcher looks at what people do and say, explores the constructs and meanings through actions and conversations in natural situations.

I was motivated to do ethnography due to my anthropological background, because this approach was pioneered by the discipline of the Anthropology. As Hammersley and Atkinson argued (2007:14), ethnography replaced ethnology integrating both empirical investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture. In this sense, I have been influenced by the Chicago School of Sociology that began researching urban environment combining ethnography and theory.

Ethnography is a methodology that gives access to beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in a cultural group (Morgan, 2008). As method of data collection it has allowed me to examine in situ natural situations, actions and talks. My research is held in the field as informants' actions and interpretations are explored in natural situations and contexts. It is also an ethnographic research regarding its scale, because it is on few cases so as to ensure deep and rich data. I was aware of the fact that ethnography has been regarded as complex, but I assumed that I needed a flexible and open research design to get in depth descriptions. For this reason, the collection of data has been unstructured and the categories to interpret data come up in the analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:16).

A deductive research design would not suit the study's purpose because it is biased by theories. In a deductive approach, the researcher has a hypothesis based on theoretical considerations that is going to be confirmed or rejected through empirical scrutiny. However, an exploratory study prioritizes data, so theoretical concepts would illuminate the findings but not guide them. Notwithstanding, I was conscious that it is unlikely to research a phenomenon being completely objective or without any preconceptions. In this regard, I think it is crucial to be aware of the theories and experiences that can shape the lenses through one is looking at the field.

Ethnography allows to observe at a micro-level the social interaction, power relations, beliefs and narratives that the mothers construct. In this sense Kondo (1990) carried an ethnography for her multi-voice analysis of power, gender and identity in a Japanese workplace. She showed that observing people in their natural environment offers a space where the researcher access to identities in "the ways people construct themselves and their lives within discursive fields of power and meaning" (1990: 43).

Due to the time limitations, it was impossible to conduct a full-scale ethnography that requires at least a year in the field (Goffman, 1989: 127). Micro-ethnography (Bryman, 2012: 433) was more suitable as it allowed to focus on a particular aspect of an issue, which was how informants give meaning to their life-worlds with regards mothering and welfare institutions.

## Participant recruitment

The sample group is composed by mothers due to accessibility. It was easier to recruit mothers because I had already met them and our relationship would provide richer data. Mothers were also chosen instead of fathers because it has been argued that parenting is gendered (Nentwich, 2008) as the CWS is. Moreover, as a researcher I have a personal interest in women's gender identity and its relation to mothering.

Romania was set as the informants' nationality due to accessibility. Last summer I worked with some mothers from Romania who were living in Stavanger, so it would be easy in terms of participant recruitment. On the other hand, I chose Romanian nationality because of the Bodnariu case that took place last November. The five children of a family composed by a Romanian father and a Norwegian mother were placed out-of-home. This led to several demonstrations against Barnevernet, the creation of webpages, petitions and campaigns to support the family asking for the return of the children. I thought it would be interesting to narrow down the research to mothers from Romania in order to explore the way they experience their worlds within the current scenario.

### *Recruitment criteria*

I set a criteria for selecting informants. They should come from Romania, have at least one child, have been living in Norway for at least three years, be able to speak in English or Spanish and not have had a history with the CWS.

Three years was the minimum period informants should have lived in Norway, because I assumed this is a reasonable period of time for a person to get acquainted with a new environment, despite the variety of factors that affect the integration process (Berry, 2005).

Informants should have at least one child, as the study was on immigrant mothers from Romania. They should understand and be able to communicate in English or Spanish because I was not able to understand their mother tongue (Romanian) nor Norwegian (the language that they speak since they live in Norway). All the informants could communicate in English apart from one who preferred to speak in Spanish, which is my mother tongue.

Informants should not have had any experiences involving CWS because this could influence their perceptions and opinions.

The sample was composed by four mothers because the focus was on rich data, so in depth descriptions were prioritized over the size of the sample.

### *Snowball sampling*

Having met two people who met the criteria made me chose snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012:202) as a method to get more informants. However, it was difficult to approach other mothers as some have left to Romania or did not want to participate. It was thanks to the cooperation of a Romanian colleague that I got to know more informants.

Firstly, I met informants individually to explain the research, to ask for their consent and for their participation. I also asked them to contact other potential informants. Being conscious of

the importance of establishing a good relationship in order to get rich data, I spent time with them to make them familiar with my presence. I recognized that their accounts were valuable as professionals and academics would learn from them, (Atkinson, 1998) and this would be important for the whole society and the quality of its institutional services. I showed my sincere interest in the topic and respect to them.

## Data collection

### *Participant observation*

My position as a participant-observant is seen as a resource for the data analysis, because I am close and distant to the field so I observed informants' interpretations and reflected on my perceptions. It is the "double interpretation" (Bryman, 2012: 31) or the researcher describing participant's interpretations and simultaneously interpreting those.

Because I based my work on the phenomenological tradition, I saw my subjectivity as a resource. As Creswell pointed out (2006:59), "phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation". I used myself, my body, my lenses, my constructs, my background and subjectivity, as a tool to become a participant-observer to others' actions and to myself. While I shared with informants their worlds, I had to reflect on my subjectivity asking myself constantly questions to explore the reasons why I perceived things the way I did.

During the observations, it was necessary to gain distance and closeness by reflecting on the reactions I experienced while I was observing. It was difficult not to evaluate actions and reminding myself that the focus was on listening and observing to explore and interpret the meanings given. I was inspired in this process by the work of my supervisor Åse Vagli (2009), who explored the institution of CWS through thick phenomenological descriptions focused on perceptions and not on objects. In her work, she understood method, theory and epistemological positions in the same way as Kondo did (1990), that is to say, not being separated but interacting and relating to one another during all the research process.

I was aware that ethnography requires constant self-reflection on my identity. I saw my position as a student who is not Norwegian neither Romanian and has not worked in the CWS as one of the strengths of the study. I was not influenced by the cultures involved in the study, and participants could feel more comfortable talking about their experiences in the host society with a foreigner. Reflecting how I was perceived by the informants and what impact these perceptions could have on the research was an important exercise. As Kondo (1990: 13) mentioned, informants place the researcher in meaningful cultural roles. The researcher experiences a fragmentation of his/her self during the research depending on the context and informants' interaction. In my case, I am a student, worker, immigrant and a young woman. My identity as an immigrant working in Norway was sometimes emphasized by informants who felt we shared similar circumstances. An example of this identification made by informants is this quote from the third informant: "(name of her daughter)! Let Raquel go home, she works tomorrow very early like mama".

The cultural roles informants placed me on (immigrant worker from a Southern country) allowed me to be on a position of trust with them, which was advantageous for the research as I got access to richer data. My identity and the cultural roles informants placed me on, provided a privileged access to the field because participants were more comfortable and open



themselves, as they felt I was a colleague who lived under similar circumstances to them. Influenced by Kondo (1990:16), I tried that the categories informants placed my identity on did not influence their responses and actions. In order to do so, I showed an open attitude towards situations and topics that were addressed. The main goal was to allow informants to give meaning to the phenomena in their cultural and personal ways.

During the data collection, I understood that the field experiences must lead the research and that rich data should serve as material to link with theories and concepts. I saw theory as a tool for the analysis, but not as a force driving the process. Nevertheless, I was conscious of the concepts and preconceptions that would influence my observations, the questions I asked, the focus I had and the way I observed.

### *Semi-structured interviews*

Interviews have allowed me to get information about some topics that cannot be simply observed. I conducted four interviews that lasted for about 2 hours each. Another advantage in the use of interviews is that they allowed me to contrast and reinforce data obtained from observation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:115).

Due to the ethnographic character of my research, I used a non-directive approach towards interviewing (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:119). I was flexible allowing the interview to flow in a way that seemed natural. Thus, interviews were used as a method that respects how informants organize meaning in their lives (DeVault, 1999 cited in Riessman, 2000:3). Interviews suited the research purpose because they go in depth into how informants understand their world. Through interviews, the researcher gets descriptions that give an understanding of how they experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 2006: 61).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because issues of power and resistance were going to be addressed. The type of interview should avoid establishing a hierarchical relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Sensitive issues and topics would come up, for instance, the interviewee would speak about her position within a system that can be felt as powerless, so the interview should not emphasize these feelings but raise their voices and rapport. These considerations about the interviews' framework have been taken into account by feminist researchers as Bryman (2012: 491) and Harding (1987) stated.

My ethnographer role was to amplify the voices of those on the social margins (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:97). Hence, interviews would be a method to study informants as subjects with agency, consciousness and meanings on their realities, instead of "objects". Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to express their own views in a way that respected their meanings, because informants led the course and used their own terms to conceptualize their life-world.

A flexible interview guide was elaborated (see appendix). It served to have in mind the topic of study, but not guiding the conversation. I wanted the interviewee to guide the conversation as this would show how she understands her life-world and gives meaning to different aspects. Although I had in mind a list with topics to be covered, I did not structure the interview with specific questions beforehand. I carried out reflexive interviews that were open-ended. This required active listening from me as a researcher. I had to identify what the interviewee had said and linked it to the research focus and the interview. I supported the informants by trying to establish a warm and natural environment in which they would share the depth of their experiences (Atkinson, 1998). Active listening required to avoid judging, biases and expected

answers. It was difficult not to think of the potential answers, but the fact that I did not have specific questions but topics to be addressed, helped me not to anticipate informants' accounts.

As Kvale (1996) stated, a good interviewer needs to have good memory to remember what have been said in order to link it to the research and the interview. Interpreting skills were important in a way that the interviewer clarifies what has been said, so as to confirm participants' meanings, but avoids giving his/her own meaning on it. Being sensitive is another skill pointed out by Kvale (1996) and that I understood basic since the research is on a sensitive topic. It also means not to listen only to the content but to the way things are said.

Having explained to the informants this technique, I had in mind the research topic and questions to expand in the conversation when I considered it necessary. My role was to keep the flow of the conversation in a natural way, although I was aware that it was not a conversation because the informant was the one talking. Whenever I considered I should expand on a topic, I asked for descriptions and contrasts in an open-ended manner. The main goal was to promote the development of answers by showing acceptance and empathy.

I was conscious of the impact my identity would have on the construction of their narratives. I was a migrant researcher researching migrants and I used this as a resource. As Yee did (2013), I exposed to them my migrant experience to create a comfortable environment in which informants would share their worlds and avoid power imbalances. I had worked with two of them, so we had a relationship that provided with a natural, trusty and comfortable atmosphere. I shared with them my experience of being a student in Norway, so they could feel they were not just objects whose narratives were of academic interest. Although it is not an insider research, I had access to rich data because informants felt they were talking to somebody who was an immigrant worker, despite being part of a Norwegian institution (student at the University of Stavanger). They did not see a researcher who wanted their opinions about their migration experience and host society, but a colleague who wanted to make their voices heard.

I was aware of the need to find a space where they would feel comfortable. Three informants offered their homes to be interviewed. I accepted the proposal because I wanted them to feel comfortable, so I was flexible to the timing and place. Also, because in their homes I could get access to richer data and observe in natural contexts and situations. The fourth informant proposed to meet at a coffee shop because its location was more convenient for her. I accepted as I thought it was very important to be flexible and adapt myself to the option she thought she was more comfortable with.

Being successful doing an interview requires to foresee some difficulties that might appear as technical issues (Roulston et al. 2003 cited in Bryman 2012:474). To face these unexpected challenges, I brought two recorders to make sure that I could record the interview in case one did not work. There was just one informant that refused to be recorded. I lowered her stress and made her feel comfortable by actively listening and taking notes instead of recording.

## Data analysis

### *Transcription*

After being recorded by an audio recorder, interviews were transcribed as the first step of the analysis process. Transcription is a time-consuming process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:149) that should be planned ahead. I carried a full-transcription that did not omit parts of the audio recording but represented in detail what it was said. A full-transcription was chosen because the recording was seen as a conversation in which all the words were important to reproduce informants' accounts. I avoided going to the field influenced by theoretical concepts, thinking of the potential responses and direct questions; so, full-transcription seemed the most appropriate to get rich descriptions to analyse in depth.

Sounds such as “yah” were only omitted to make the written text more comprehensible. When an informant omitted a word, parentheses were used in the transcription. Interviewers were contacted when clarification was required to understand a quotation.

The transcript should reproduce what it has been said by the informants during the interview (Bryman, 2012: 485), so the audio recorded was transcribed verbatim without paraphrasing every word.

### *Thematic analysis*

Data were analysed by the method of thematic analysis. In this process, the researcher built on the data from the research questions (Creswell, 2006), emphasizing relevant statements or quotes that could give an understanding of interviewees' way of experiencing the phenomenon. I was influenced by the psychological phenomenology and Mousakas' processes of “horizontalization” and “clusters of meaning identification” (Mousakas, 1994 cited in Creswell, 2006:9). “Horizontalization” refers to the task of looking at the data, in particular interviews' transcriptions, and searching for quotes that show how the informant has experienced the research topic. Thus, after transcribing the interviews, I immersed myself in the data and search for significant sentences that could express how the mothers experience the phenomenon to study.

In the development of themes and subthemes, I followed Bryman's definition of themes (2012: 580) as the categories the researcher identifies through the data, related to the research focus and built on the codes recognized in the transcripts. I was guided by the research questions when I went through the transcriptions and identified clusters of meanings that could give a “basic for a theoretical understanding of the data and a theoretical contribution to the literature” (Bryman, 2012: 580). I was also influenced by Ryan and Bernard (2003, cited in Bryman: 2012: 580), looking for repetitions, analogies, similarities, differences and omissions. Repetition was considered to be helpful criterion to determine a pattern within the data that could be a theme, that is to say, topics, meanings and ways of experiencing the phenomenon that were present in several occasions. Putting the focus on linguistic connectors was another. In this sense, especially when I looked for reasons, causes and consequences, I analysed the words said by the informants as “because”.

Figures of speech as metaphors and analogies were a powerful tool for informants to express how they experience a phenomenon. An example of that could be this quote from the third

informant: “they (Norwegians) are like robots, like a horse: drink, eat, sex. Animals” or the comparison by the first informant regarding the staff that works at kindergarten with shepherds who do not intervene but just observe.

I assigned a different colour to each theme (see appendix). Then, I identified quotes that express mothers’ experiences in each theme and colour them. So, it was easier to go through the data, focus on one theme or analyse an idea.

Regarding the presentation of the themes, I was influenced by Moustakas (1994, cited in Creswell, 2006:61) who considered that in phenomenological data analysis, the researcher uses the quotes to describe each theme. When showing each topic, my focus has been on describing how the informants experience it.

## Ethical principles

Researchers with a qualitative design should consider ethical issues, especially regarding confidentiality, informed consent and anonymity. Social research should respect the ethical principles that have been summarized by Diener and Crandall (1978), cited in Bryman (2012: 135) in: harm to participants, informed consent, privacy and deception.

In referring to harm to participants, not only physical harm is meant but also emotional. In order to minimize this, non-direct questions were asked on sensitive issues. In this way, interviewees could feel they guided the interview choosing what to say about the topic. The principle of confidentiality is linked to harm to participants because by making sure that the identities of the informants will be kept as confidential, the researcher was protecting them from harm once the interview was held.

Informed consent was asked and obtained as a prerequisite to conduct the interviews. The study was an over-ethnographic research where participants were informed beforehand about the research process. An informed letter (see appendix) was given to them at a first meeting where the researcher exposed the study she was carrying out as part of a Master’s degree in Social Work. Informants’ doubts about the research purpose and scope were clarified. Then, they agreed on signing an informed consent form. This first contact was crucial not only to get their consent, but to establish a relationship based on trust and confidence. Related to the principle of informed consent is privacy, as the informants understand that they are going to share personal information but their privacy is respected by the use of pseudonyms.

Finally, in qualitative research deception can occur when the researcher presents the findings in another way that participants meant (Bryman: 143). During the interview, I clarified I understood informants’ accounts in the same way they meant it. I also offered them to read the final text so as to ensure I had captured their views.

### *NSD approval*

The research required the approval from the Norwegian Social Science Data Service that is the “Data Protection Official for research for all the Norwegian universities” (NSD, 2015). I got the approval in January, 2016, reference number 45876 (see appendix), so the research has accepted and respected the guidelines of the NSD and the general research ethics.

## Limitations

### *Participant recruitment*

As I had already met people who met the criteria I set, I thought that recruiting informants was going to be an easy task. However, I found that some of the mothers I met had left to Romania, and others never replied back to my first message in which I explained that I was back in Stavanger doing a research on immigrant mothers. For those who were willing to participate, it was difficult to find the time to meet. Thus, I had to explore other ways of getting to know more potential participants. I talked to other students about my project and it was thanks to one student from Romania that I was introduced to more informants. I realized that recruitment can be time-consuming and challenging. The researcher's social skills and own networks are valuable resources to get into contact with people that meet the criteria in such a short period of time.

### *Language barrier*

I thought informants' level of English was good enough to do the interviews. However, it was with the third informant that I realized that language was a barrier. Her English was not so advanced to express herself in several occasions. For this reason, I ensured I understood her meanings by paraphrasing her words back during the conversation. My purpose was to ensure that I was grasping her own meanings and that I had understood it in the way she expressed it.

The second interviewee always spoke in Spanish to me because it is my mother tongue and she feels more fluent in it than in English. The interview, talks and interactions during the observations were very rich due to the use of my mother tongue. This allowed her to find concrete words to describe and give meaning to her life-world, and for me to understand what she meant. However, it was more challenging to transcribe her accounts. The fact that I am fluent in English but not a translator, made me spend more time looking for English expressions or words to reproduce exactly what she had said in Spanish.

### *Misinterpretation of the researcher role*

My identity and the previous relationship I had with two of the informants was the major strength of the study, because it gave me access to richer data. Nevertheless, I reflected on this position as a researcher because it would impact the research process and informants' accounts and expectations from the study.

At our first meeting, I explained the project to them and made clear that I was not only the immigrant young women worker, but a researcher. I made sure that my purpose was the collection of data for the academic task of knowledge production.

My position as close and distant led to ethical considerations regarding data treatment and informants' expectations on my role. In order to avoid participants feeling they were merely objects whose stories were taken, I expressed the importance of their participation in the research for the immigrant community and Norwegian society. In this respect, showing informants that they could get something beneficial from the study avoided power imbalances and a unidirectional relation.

Misunderstandings with my role were identified with the third informant. On several occasions she mentioned that speaking to me helped her because I listened as a good friend. She expressed gratitude to be listened to that I interpreted as the therapeutic power of talking within the research process. However, I had to make clear that although we had a relationship, my purpose with our interview was academic. I valued the empowering and therapeutic character of talking, I offered my active listening as a colleague too, but with the interview my purpose was to collect data.

She also demanded an advocate role from me with regards to prompt change in the CWS interventions. At that point it was very important to clarify that my purpose was not the implementation of something but to explore a topic, so lawmakers, professionals and academics would have more information to work with. I was there to make visible their voices so others could listen to them and reflect.

### *Reliability and validity*

Social sciences produce descriptions of a social world that represent rather than reproduce the reality due to the perspectives they are framed by (Hammersley, 1992 cited in Peräkylä, 1997). However, a researcher should take measures so these descriptions can be empirically tested. In ethnography, the focus is on validity (Kirk and Miller, 1986:21, 42 cited in Peräkylä, 1997) as the researcher is concerned about the interpretation. During the research, I expressed to the informants what I had understood by their words, being aware of their open-ended interpretative character. So, I took the proof procedure Sack et al. talked about (Peräkylä, 1997: 209). Moreover, participant-observation was a method to achieve accuracy as it contrasted what was said in the interviews.

Regarding validity within the relation between observations and theories, the context was highlighted in order to have richer descriptions where to identify theoretical concepts. I put the focus on what was said, where, how, by whom and to whom. Particularly, I reflected on my own position because ethnography requires this reflexivity (Bryman, 2012: 393). As I have already mentioned, my position was considered a strength and my subjectivity a resource due to the type of data and the phenomenological character of the research. I have also been aware that interpretation does not end with the completion of my writing, but that the reader will also interpret the findings.

To achieve reliability, I took measures as the quotation of informants' statements from the data and ensuring the technical quality of the recordings. For the first informant who did not want to be recorded, I produced her life story and asked her if I had covered what she had said in the way she did.

Regarding transferability, the degree to which findings could be generalized was not relevant for the research. The study focused on rich data or detailed accounts of the informants' giving-meaning processes. Thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973a cited in Bryman, 2012:392) were prioritized over a larger sample, because the focus was not on generalizations but the exploration of how specific women give meaning to their life-worlds under specific circumstances and contexts.

## Chapter Five: Research findings and analysis

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the study and how they can be analysed in order to answer the research questions.

When it comes to illustrate the findings, my purpose is to exhibit the complexity I have found in the narratives that have been collected. As a researcher, I asked myself how to write rich descriptions that show the complexity of informants' experiences and being scientifically reliable. I came up with the construction of narratives that bring the reader closer to the informants' voices. In this exercise, I present two narratives that mix elements from the data. I pretend to produce two models that show the different patterns present in the collected narratives regarding acculturation, mothering, conceptualizations of childhood and level of trust in welfare institutions. My purpose is to create an evocative text as an author and to draw the reader's attention into the findings. I emphasize informants' voices by describing richly their worlds. As Van Manen (1997) stated, a researcher is an author. Thus, doing research is a process of knowledge production and data analysis.

All in all, with the production of two narratives (Joana and Roxana), I would like to introduce the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) that have been the background in which informants have formed their opinions, crafted their selves and given meaning to their life-worlds. Before showing the meanings they give to their experiences through themes and subthemes, I believe that it is necessary to contextualize these women. It is important to frame their perceptions and giving-meaning within the material conditions, social interactions, political context and culture in which these women have defined their identities. If perspectives are going to be explored, situations and life-stories need to be taken into consideration, because they are the context that frame individuals' perspectives and ways of thinking.

This way of contextualizing the findings shows another advantage of the use and production of narratives: they help the researcher to take the reader to the experience she has had in the field (Kondo, 1990:7). The previous relationship I had with the informants, my days of observations, our talks, coffees, walks, phone calls and interviews, put me on a familiar position with their voices. In order to make them visible to the reader, I would like to present Joana and Roxana's narratives.

### Joana and Roxana: the voices.

#### *Joana*

I was born 32 years ago in Romania, five years before communist regime fell. It was not an easy time for my parents who worked from day to night to provide for me and my sister, Ileana, with food and clothes. Dad was a painter and mom worked at an office.

After communism, things were not better. I decided not to study at university, because having a degree doesn't make any difference. Some of my friends did. However, if they wanted a good job they needed some connections or to pay a commission. Girls were also required to have sex in exchange of being hired. Ileana became a nurse. The health system is very corrupted too. She worked 10 hours a day and didn't get any salary for 6 months. In the end, she moved to Italy with her husband. I stayed with my parents working as a waitress. In 2007 my mother died of

a heart attack. She was very healthy, but she was Romanian and the Romanian life is very hard. People stress every night asking themselves how to provide their families with food on the next day.

It was so hard to live in the same house without my mother. Working became harder too. The salary was lower and we struggled without my mother's income. Ileana sent us some money, but she had two boys and the recession that was hitting Italy made it difficult for her to go ahead. A year after, Ileana decided to move to Norway. She heard of Stavanger, the capital of the oil. She found a job in housekeeping because without speaking Norwegian she could not work as a nurse. Her husband worked as a truck-driver.

I met my husband in 2009. He was different to other boys. We were 25 years old and at that age boys just wanted to party. However, I wanted a better job, save money and have children. I had a purpose and my faith in God was the force to keep me fighting for it. My husband wanted the same. We starting a relationship and in a year we got married at the church, in front of God. We are orthodox and for us religion is the most important thing. It makes us better people because it helps us to face problems and behave well. Religion gives meaning to our existence.

The lack of a stable income made impossible to have an independent life. We lived with my father until we decided to move to Stavanger in 2011. My sister had told her manager about me and I got a contract before arriving. My husband found a job in a maintenance company. We earned enough money to send some to my father. We rented the cheapest apartment we found. Our objective was to work, make money and save. We sacrificed our youth, so we could go back and set a business in Romania.

I knew that living in Norway would be challenging. The weather is awful, windy and cold. And the people, they are cold too. The only reason we came is the money. We didn't have the opportunity to have a decent life in Romania as many immigrants I met working in Stavanger. I do not have Norwegians friends. My neighbour is Norwegian, but she never says hello. They are very distant. It is also that we are not the same kind of people. For me, there are basic values in my life, as religious faith that Norwegians lack. They are empty people who only care about eating, buying things and having sex. They are like the Vikings: basic people who are proud and do not believe in nothing. They are raised in an extreme freedom, so they believe they deserve whatever they feel like. This extreme freedom is in their culture and threatens families and the society. You need a focus that gives meaning and guidance to your life. If you don't have some discipline in your childhood, you will become an empty person curious about drugs and homosexuality.

My landlord Ole got divorced because his wife used to go out while he was taking care of their children. You cannot behave as if you were single! However, Norwegians have been told that it is right to do whatever they want. Their sporty clothes, their tattoos and style, all show that they do not respect anybody but their desires. Children at 16 years can have sex, take drugs and drink alcohol, and it is seen normal. Homosexuals get married and have children. Even Christmas is empty here. In Romania, we happily and gratefully celebrate that Jesus was born. In Norway, it is just about holidays and consumerism.

Anyway, I am fine as long as nobody criticises me. I do not disturb their lives, so they have to accept me. But they feel they have the right to give their opinion about how you are raising your child. I heard that at school they give their opinions about your religious beliefs and how they affect your child. Even a stranger in the park told me I was very protective with my girl because I was scared she would fall.



Well, there are some things I like in here. For example, the stability. In Norway you are not stressed about how to survive. I like the health system because they have many resources. Also, children are provided with everything. In Romania children have real needs: no food nor roof over their heads, but in Norway children have everything. They are even protected from their parents, who are seen as a threat instead of the most important figures in their lives. Parents are under much pressure to provide their children with everything and allow them to do everything they want.

I gave birth to Tatiana in 2013. When I gave birth, I was very well looked after by the Norwegian health system. During my pregnancy, my husband and I looked for some information about raising a child in Norway. We got to know the benefits and leaves that are very helpful. We got information about Barnevernet and the stories about immigrant children who were removed.

I thought the media exaggerated. However, after the Bodnariu case I got very worried. I read some information on Facebook, then articles and webpages that said that there is a mafia behind Barnevernet. It makes sense. Norway has low population and Norwegian women are not healthy. Immigrants become pregnant easily and have healthy babies. Norway also needs children because homosexuals are allowed to have a family. For these reasons, there is an apparatus that works together (Police, kindergartens, hospitals ...) to pick up the immigrant children they like and give them to Norwegians. Everyone can report. If a neighbour is jealous of you and she wants to cause pain to you, she can report. Or if another person sees you drinking a beer while you are with your baby. In these cases, Barnevernet will trust them because they are Norwegians. Even children can report. We have been children and we invented things to get whatever we wanted.

I live in fear all the time, for example when I go to the kindergarten or for a walk. I had to take Tatiana to kindergarten because I work, but I would prefer her not to go because I do not agree with the way they work. They are like shepherds, just staring at the children. They do not guide children, nor teach them. There is no discipline and I believe children need to be told how to do things by adults. The way Norwegians are raised makes them very dependent. Parents think everything comes with time and they do not teach their children to eat alone and go to the toilet. However, I am teaching my daughter songs in Romanian and doing activities with her. She has to do things and have a focus.

I want to move to Romania when she reaches the school age because I do not want Tatiana to grow up in a place where everything is accepted as homosexuality and sex at a very young age. I neither like the education system. In Romania students learn quicker and there is discipline to help them to mature. Here there is no homework and students learn so slowly. However, my husband says that in Romania things are still hard and there are more opportunities in Norway. He thinks we can teach our values to her at home and prevent her from becoming Norwegian.

I think that if Barnevernet admits its mistakes, I will calm down. If they put aside their Norwegian pride and accept that they have been wrong. If they cooperate with parents, I will live here more relaxed. I understand that children who are abused, live with drugs, alcohol or violence need to be taken out-of-home. However, what about the Bodnariu? They had food, a house, the parents seemed good. I watched the documentary the Romanian TV broadcast. Well, you can lose your patience with five children as they had; but I think Barnevernet was mistaken and they could have worked with the family. Children need to be with their parents. If they grow up in another family, they will have mental problems.

Anyway, if we stay in Norway, I would like to be happy. To have more guided-activities for my daughter, to see more religion and meaning in the Norwegian society and more leisure. Life is so boring. You would not guess they are the richest country when you only see countryside.

### *Roxana*

I was born in 1976 in Transylvania. I remember where I grew up as a rural area where people were very humble. I was a single daughter and lived with my parents. My dad was a mechanic and my mom used to sew for a local boutique. I was very obedient and always respected adults. However, adults were not always respectful to children.

My school days' memories are painful. It was such a torture to go to school because I knew that the teacher was going to hit us. Although I was 7, I had lots homework. I was a good student but the teacher punished us for stupid reasons. I did not have time to play. My parents understood that studying was the key to get the dreamed future they did not. They instilled me the belief that university had to be my goal. They faced economic issues, but managed to pay a private tutor to help me.

When the communist regime fell, we hoped things would change. However, difficulties and poverty were present. The boutique my mother worked for closed-down. A cousin of my mother had left to Spain and found a job in housekeeping for my mother. She moved to Madrid. I did not like this decision although I knew that for her it was very challenging too. I felt abandoned. Dad was great, but he is a man and I needed a woman.

Her remittances helped us a lot. I studied business administration. When I finished my degree I moved to Spain with my mother to study a masters. I wanted to specialize in tourism and had international experiences. I had always lived in a rural environment with people that did not have so many expectations, only work, save money and have children. I was 23 and knew that there were other realities. I enjoyed getting to know another culture and reflecting on my own. Surprisingly, I discovered I missed things from Romania: the humility and generosity of the people. Madrid was a huge city there was competition everywhere. Nevertheless, I appreciate the warm welcome that Spaniards gave to me.

After my Masters, I worked at a tourist agency in Madrid. I went to Romania for holidays. It was on New Years' eve in 2003 when I met Andrei. I was astonished by his attitude towards life, he is so optimistic. He studied engineering and travelled around Europe to learn languages. When we met, he was working in Austria for a company in the oil sector. I went back to Madrid but Andrei was in my mind all the time. I went to visit him and I really liked Austria, so I moved with him the next summer. It was time to practice my German and discover other cultures.

It was more difficult to make friends in Austria. Maybe it was the culture, weather or that I was not enrolled in any course. I worked in the reception of a Hotel. Living with Andrei was perfect. I got pregnant in 2004 and we decided to have the baby. We loved each other, we were not so young, we wanted to have a family at some point and we had job security. Andrei was offered a position in Stavanger. The salary and working-conditions were better, so we moved. We also thought that Norway was a good country to have the baby for its family-friendly policies. I did not want my child to have my childhood: abandoned and stressed by homework and pressure. I wanted him to be benefited by my presence, by opportunities to develop his creative and academic skills. To be surrounded by a relaxing environment in which he could find something he is really good at. I always thought my baby was an independent person, and my role was to support him to be happy in the way he decides.

I gave birth in November, 2004. It was traumatic. The doctors only accepted a natural birth, but I felt that I should have had an induction. Finally, I had a caesarean because Alexandru couldn't come out by himself. My life and Alexandru's were put at risk. After this, I hope not to get sick in Norway. I do not trust the health system also because when Alexandru has been ill, doctors have spent too much time to diagnose him.

Being a mother is fantastic. It is so challenging though. I remember leaving the room when Alexandru cried too much. It is not his fault if I am tired or unexperienced. I left the room to breathe and went back with more patience. The first year was exhausting. I was criticised by my Romanian friends because I breastfed him, they think it is something rural and old-fashioned.

Romanians also criticise that Andrei and I are not married, but I do not care. I have always felt out of place in Romania. However, living in Norway made me realize that I miss things from my country. For instance, the friendly people who share with you everything. Norwegians are very polite. My neighbours say "hi". However, I have never been invited to any house. In the end, I mainly made friends in the expat community. It is nice to meet people from all over the world, but it is hard to have so many farewells. Andrei has met more Romanians because he goes to Church. I am not religious, but if my son wants to go to Church I will respect that.

As Andrei's contract is unlimited, we bought a house and planned to stay here at least until Alexandru finishes high school. Then, who knows? I am still a wanderer who travels to discover new things. I have learned Norwegian and discovered so many values I would like to embrace. I love the way Norwegians respect nature, the importance they give to being outdoors and enjoy free time.

I feel I have done the right thing raising my child in Norway because he has the childhood I could not. Alexandru has played on the streets, he has had many excursions with the school that has prioritized his wellbeing and own decisions over high grades. My experiences made me conclude that the most valuable lessons are learned by relationships and trips. Books do not teach you how to live. Alexandru has developed his creative and social skills. I have been next to him, giving him a space of comfort and trust. I have advised him, but he always decides by himself. Sometimes I was there waiting him to fall, so I could support him.

I keep working training tourist guides because I need to do things. However, I work part-time because I think it is important to be involved in Alexandru's upbringing. I like that there are so many opportunities for families to spend time together. Families are taken care of. A friend had a traumatic experience and got help from Barnevernet. She spoke very highly but I have read that this institution has been accused of taking children. Especially after the Bodnariu case, when I go to Romania everybody asks me what is going on. I think the media is doing a campaign against Barnevernet. My country should be more concerned about our children who are starving, instead of looking at Norway.

## Thematic analysis

Before describing each theme, a demographic re-introduction of the four informants is presented:

Informant 1: 35 years. 4 years old daughter. 7 years in Stavanger. Married. Orthodox. Housekeeping.

Informant 2: 26 years. One and a half year old son. 3 years in Sandnes. Common-law partner. No religious. Studying a Masters and job seeker.

Informant 3: 30 years. 2 years old daughter. 3 years in Sandnes. Married. Orthodox. Housekeeping.

Informant 4: 47 years. 23 years old son (in Austria) and 14 years old daughter. 2 years in Stavanger. Married. No religious. Working in health and safety.

I identified five themes: motherhood and mothering, childhood and children, acculturation, Welfare State and CWS. Each one is composed by subthemes that describe the way informants experienced a particular topic from different angles.

### *Theme 1: Motherhood and mothering*

Feminist scholars have considered the concept of motherhood as rooted in the patriarchy oppression towards women. Rich (1976) spoke about motherhood as an institution that serves the patriarchy to disempower women under male control.

From post-structural feminism, power is not possessed. Therefore, there is no need of fighting against motherhood as an institution but transforming it in a way that serves to empower women. A voice that has represented this discourse has been O' Reilly (2004), who defends mothering as a women experience. Mothers are not, then, women whose power has been taken, but women who define their empowering relationships with their children.

Both, motherhood and mothering were present in all the narratives. Motherhood as the status achieved by becoming a mother, and mothering as the way informants understand and experience their role as mothers and the practices they take to raise their children.

### *Subtheme: Motherhood*

Informants placed their "mother" status in an important place in their lives. All said that they wanted to become a mother. Even the second informant who did not expect to have her baby, said that she had already planned to be a mother in the future.

I planned to have children (...), I thought to have children when I was 28. I thought that was the age. In the end, it was before. We decided to have it and in the end it was better. I don't think I am sacrificing two years of my entire life, because I am gaining a lot (Informant 2).

The empowering character of becoming mother is showed by the extract above when she stated that she is "gaining a lot". "Being a mother" is seen an enriching status that contributes to human growth.

The same informant kept expressing this:

I think (name of her son) is the best thing I have done. It was so good life before, I was just lying on the bed, watching movies, doing nothing and now I have to take care of him. But it is so nice when you get up and he starts to kiss you, hugs you. It is so nice. It is the best thing I have done in my life, even though it has been soon and unexpected (Informant 2).

“Being a mother” is a category that is given great importance by informants and that shapes their lives. It is so influential that affects how they experience their realities and the decisions they take. For instance, the first informant moved to Norway to work and give her daughter the opportunity to study. She sees her daughter as the motivation that keeps her alive despite the challenges.

The relationship they have with their children is so important that they put so much attention and care to this bond.

I quit my job because of the children, even here I have only a part time job (...) to keep my mind busy, (...) but also I go to the school and I am volunteer (...) to be close to my children. (Informant 4).

Therefore, “being a mother” is a personal status that is given a privileged position by the informants. However, this does not mean that they put ahead being a mother of their personal freedom, but that they place importance to the establishment of a new kind of relationship with their children that brings them power and satisfaction.

I think that in Spain women are (...) very feminist, they want to get a good position, a career, and then they wake up and they are 35 and want to have children and they cannot or it is more complicated (Informant 2).

They value having a career and personal projects, at the same time they consider motherhood a status that offers them satisfaction, happiness, strength and personal growth. Motherhood is not seen as an oppressive institution. However, they focus on the empowering character of mothering. Despite motherhood being desired, informants are aware of the efforts that it supposes.

At the beginning I wanted to have a boy also, but it (being a mother) is very hard, very hard (...) this is a big job. (Informant 3).

### *Subtheme: Mothering practices*

Although the four informants experienced a desired motherhood, the relationship they establish with their children is influenced by how they understand their role as a mother, and their conceptualization of childhood and filiation. These understandings are shaped by mothers’ gender, age, culture, race, spirituality and class.

Cultures are composed by values that help societies to adapt and that guide generations to face a phenomenon. In terms of mothering, cultures provide mothers with values to handle their new reality. These are based on the idea of “adaptive adult” and “ideal child” (Strier, 1996). Due to the cultural clash between the conceptualizations of the host society and that of origin, children are between different expectations and values from parents and socializing agents.

As Strier (1996) stated, although there are several factors that influence the “adaptive adult” that parents hold, it is culture the most determinant. For instance, communist society’s culture

emphasizes respect for authority and collectivism (Shouval, et al., 1986 cited in Strier, 1996:2). Norwegian adaptive adult is based on negotiation as the base for establishing an equal relationship with children (Sommer, D., Samuelsson, I.P., Hundeide, K., 2010).

Mothering practices have been one of the most relevant themes across the data. Especially with regards to the functions informants assign themselves as mothers, and to the socializing aspect of mothering. Psychological phenomenology has analysed mothering in terms of culturally childrearing methods (LeVine, 2007 cited in Barlow and Chapin, 2010). Mothers teach values and meanings that are embedded in a culture and contribute to their children's acculturation. This socializing character of mothering was emphasized in the discourses. Mothers referred to mothering as embedded in a culture and mothering practices representing a societal, national and cultural values. In analysing this, we cannot leave out that informants are immigrants, so the acculturation process and cultural clash they face, are decisive in the way they experience all their selves (being a mother, a worker, a student, a woman, a wife, a neighbour, a user...).

From a feminist perspective, mothering is considered an aggregate of practices culturally shaped that shape the structures within women live in (Barlow and Chapin, 2010). Mothering is, therefore, how mothers culturally shape the natural bonding of their motherhood. These practices are influenced by kinship, family and work (Moore, 1988 in Barlow and Chapin, 2010: 7). For this reason, we can find a variety of mothering practices within cultures and socioeconomic groups. Despite some universals in mothering (Barlow and Chapin, 2010), such as protection and nurturing, every woman actively gives meaning to their relationship with their children.

Looking through the narratives, these universals are present but two mothering-practices models can be identified: in the first, mothers put the focus on protection, in the second, mothers give importance to their children's freedom and participation. Another pattern in the narratives is the fact that informants identified Norwegian mothering practices that differ from Romanians. They gave their opinion about both and valued them as more or less appropriate for their children wellbeing. Those who represent the protection-focus model agree with the identified Romanian mothering practices, whereas informants who take the children's participation model speak highly of the Norwegian.

The mothering-practices model focused on children's participation was in the narratives of the second and fourth informant. From them it can be seen that the mothering relationship they establish is characterized by support and freedom. They understand their role as mothers as a person who is close to their children and give them support, so they can achieve their own goals. They see children as active actors who have the right to participate in their lives.

Both mothers define themselves as not religious and have studied a Master's degree. However, they differ in age (in 21 years) and employment (one working another looking for a job).

I have selected some extracts from both narratives to show this mothering-practices model:

The boy should develop his artistic side to be competent in life, because in my case what I learned at school didn't help me to manage in life (...) I want him to learn practical things, not theory. I think it is good (to learn theory too), but I would like to have the freedom in order him to learn. (Informant 2)

I am baptised in our religion, orthodox, but I don't practice it. However, if my son would like to get more information about religion it is my pleasure. I think it is good for him to know and he can choose. In Romania they have to choose that (being orthodox) (Informant 2).

They (children) need, like a plant, to be very strong, very beautiful and nice. They need the right place to be, you cannot have here a cactus here because it is too much water, but also you need the sun, you need good soil with nutrition and this is, ok, our role as a parents. If you are like a big tree around them just to protect them, ok, not bit of wind, not bit of sun, also you absorb all the energy around them and they will be very thin and not strong and this if for the all-time. I think my children are like a plant, at the beginning a small seed. To grow up they need to be in the good environment and me to be there but not to (overprotect them) (Informant 4).

From the two extracts bellow it can be observed that informants who take the participation-focus model have an image of adaptive adult that shares elements with that from the society of settlement. However, they do not maintain elements from their culture of origin in their understanding of the role and functions of this figure.

Regarding the education, I allow the child to do much more (than Romanians). In Romania they are yelling to the child: “don’t do this, don’t do that, and don’t put your hand, no, no, no!” I let him, he comes, he plays (...), that he is dirty, it is ok, that he doesn’t wash himself up every day, ok. In Romania washing is daily (...). They (Romanian parents) are all the time: “the baby!” It is like the baby is on a pedestal and it is a big thing. Here (in Norway) it is like something natural, normal. There, in Romania, you cannot leave the child in the rain because he is getting sick (Informant 2).

Here (in Norway) I see children playing together, and also (...) they have a lot of sports activities where the parents are involved going with them (...) That is different because now in Romania the parents they are very focus let’s say on the jobs, and they try to offer the children a lot of conditions but not spending so much time with them. This is, I think, not ok. (Informant 4).

The second model of mothering practices, presented by the first and third informants, is characterized by a more guiding, disciplined and protective position with regards to their children. Mothers see themselves as a guide and guardian. They understand their role as guides for their children, who shows them what is right and wrong and teaches them how to satisfy their primary needs. However, they do not consider some rights recognized by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) such as freedom of expression, participation or religious faith.

These mothers see children as in a vulnerable position who need protection and do not know how to live due to their inexperience. The strategy they take is the called by Strier (1996:3) “Kangaroo”. It promotes the adaptive adult from their culture of origin and defends culture maintenance and children’s protection.

They also give great importance to the formal education as a mean for their children to mature and succeed in life. Both mothers give especial attention to religion. Both are young and, although one of them has a degree, they both work in housekeeping and feel they have no career prospects.

I agree with children protection but not with giving them so much freedom. Children need discipline. You need to explain to your daughter things, so she can understand and be independent. However, in Norway parents wait because they think the child will see and learn (Informant 1).

They (children) must learn, you must make them make something good, to write, to do sports, to, I don’t know, to sing on the piano, or on something, something like this, not to make sex, and on drugs and disco and everything like this because in this

(permissive way), if they do it like this, they (Norwegians) don't have people to work to make something good, so Norway will be down (Informant 3).

The lack of discipline and obedience-hierarchical based relationships in the Norwegian parenting practices is seen by both mothers as unappropriated and ineffective.

They (Norwegians parents) are permissive, they must do something to change it. Ok not with a fight, ok, but not to leave them (children) alone to make everything they want. No. This is a mistake, you must tell them (Informant 3).

Mothers with the protection model agree with discipline and guidance to raise their children. These are connected with respect and developed in hierarchical relationships.

However, in Scandinavia obedience is a value that is not promoted (Sommer et al., 2010). So, it is not unexpected that both mothers position themselves against the identified Norwegian mothering practices. Another method of child raising widely refused by Scandinavian societies is violent correction. Corporal punishment (Hollekim, et al., 2015) is not seen as a valid method to raise a child under any circumstances. Nevertheless, informants recognize that violence is used as a method to raise children in Romania.

In Romania you cannot hit your children neither, but I know that it is something that still happens (Informant 1).

On the Romanian literature there are so many stories about children abuse. "I have lost a napkin my mother is going to hit me" "(...) In songs, poetry, probers... Some are current. I sing them because my parents, my mother, in kindergartens, they taught it to me and I see it as something that is normal, but if I analyse it, it is totally wrong. (Informant 2)

"If you hit me twice with one part of an axe, it is because you love me" (from a song). And people do it in the countryside. Romania is a place that is ruralized (...) Historically in Romania it has been said that hitting the child is something natural and the literature shows that. (...) I have been hit. My mother, not my dad. In the school. It is something normal. (Informant 2)

Although they condemn violence, in the extract bellow the informant could be justifying it ("you get crazy with five children"). She could be giving less importance to punishment, than to provide children with food and shelter, that is, in her opinion, the main parental function.

With this family Bodnariu, I think a problem is on them (CWS), not on this family. Ok, they are mistaken a little bit, I don't know, the family has five children. Ok, you get crazy with five children, but it is not correct to take them from their family because they are not doing something wrong: they have food to eat, they have drink to drink, they have a place to stay. (Informant 3)

In conclusion, through the four narratives together with some universals, it was found that there are different mothering practices in Norway and Romania. Therefore, informants acknowledge the cultural aspect of mothering and identify it in their context of mobility. The mothers who represent the participation mothering-practices model think that the Norwegian mothering practices are appropriate. In their opinions, these help them to adopt the role that they understand they have as mothers, and their children to grow as independent persons with own rights and agency.

However, for the mothers that represent the protection model, the Norwegian mothering practices are a threat for raising their children in which they consider an appropriate mothering



relationship and childhood. In their opinions, these practices are too permissive that cannot provide children with the discipline and guidance they demand to become adults.

### *Theme two: Conceptualization of children and childhood*

Mothering is a complex relationship in which there are at least two actors who give meaning to their interaction (Barlow and Chapin, 2010). Mothers give meaning to their position within the relationship with their children, functions and role, but children have also expectations and agency within this relationship. The way that mothers see their children, influenced by their context and culture, will affect the practices they take. For instance, if mothers see children as becoming rather than being, as vulnerable rather than participant, they will take a protector role rather than an advocate (Skivenes and Strandby, 2006).

#### *Subtheme: Conceptualization of children*

Norway has been considered a pioneer in the implementation of children's rights (Jorgensen and Montgomery, 2011). Not only has the application of the CRC supposed an advance in children's rights politically and legally, but also in the increment of awareness towards a children's right culture. Norway has taken a child's rights approach that can be seen in its domestic laws and policies. These show a conceptualization of children as subjects who are entitled to individual rights.

This view emerged with the modernization of democratic states that moved the focus from protection and primary needs' satisfaction to democratic individual rights. However, states and adults are responsible to incorporate this conceptualization into decision-making and practices (Skivenes and Strandby, 2006). Parents, professionals and policy-makers, are seen as advocate by societies, such as the Norwegian, which hold this conceptualization of children.

This conceptualization is opposed to the traditional view of children as human-becoming, that is to say, humans who are turning into adults, so are in a vulnerable position and need protection (Skivenes and Strandby, 2006). This is based on the assumption that children are an audience towards adults who play the role of educator and protector against the risks they have conceptualized as so.

Through the narratives, the meanings mothers give to children determine their mothering practices. If they understand children as agents entitled to own rights, they assume an advocate role, whereas if they hold the conceptualization of children as human becoming, their role is more protection-focused. As it happened with the mothering practices, mothers are aware of the cultural character of the conceptualization of children. They are conscious of the fact that in Norway children are seen differently than in Romania.

I don't think this family (Bodnariu) did something (wrong). (...) They are 5 kids, and nobody wants, they have a place, you know, I repeat that. They have a family, where to live, what to eat, everyone has a room, the bed to sleep, everything a normal kid here in Norway because everyone, every children here in Norway, if you want to live with the children you have everything. (...) it is not correct to pick them up (CWS out-of-home care measures), because they have everything. They must come to Romania to see the children. Ok? And I want to see their opinion. What are you doing in our children if you take these children who are ok? (Informant 3)

Therefore, children material needs are recognized and adults' role to satisfy them. However, children's rights present in the CRC are not mentioned, so these mothers do not think they should assume an advocate role to ensure their children exercise of those rights.

I don't have nothing with (against) them (homosexuals), it is their life and I don't care, but I don't want to go with my child in the park and see the girls touching everywhere and kissing in the park. No! It is very disgusting for me. For my child she doesn't know because she is very small, but in the future... (Informant 3)

From the extract above, the third informant shows that her child needs to be protected from something she considers wrong: homosexuality. It is her role as a mother to protect her daughter by trying to separate her from homosexuals.

The cultural clash in the conceptualization of children is shown below. According to the second informant the rural character of Romania has influenced the way children have been conceptualized.

(...) my parents, I think they had me because of love but (name of a friend) for example, she told me that she doesn't know why her parents had her. She hopes it wasn't for them to have help with the domestic chores. Principally, children in Romania were born to take care of their parents when they get old and help in the domestic chores (Informant 2).

The meaning they give to children is culturally shaped with regards to the reason why children are born. This refers to children as means for families or as independent agents. Those mothers who represented the participation-focus model highlighted their children individuality (own goals and decisions), so among them it can be identified the conceptualization of children as active agents. This conceptualization requires from them the role of advocate (participation-focus mothering practices). Informants with the protection model expressed their idea of children as objects, who are part of a family and demand protection and discipline to become adults.

#### *Subtheme: Conceptualization of good childhood*

The conceptualization of children is linked to adults' idealization of what a good childhood is like. Traditionally, parents have idealized childhood as a stage in life free of risks. This is influenced by their assumption of dangers that changes within the cultural, temporal and socioeconomic contexts (Skivenes and Strandby, 2006).

In the narratives, the mothers who see children as individuals with own rights consider childhood a stage in which human beings discover themselves and must experience things. They emphasized freedom, playing, artistic activities and sports for their children growth.

Here (in Norway) what I saw is that the children still have the childhood like me. When I was a child I could go out outside to play on the street and to play a lot with other children (...) I think here (in Norway) children have a very good life. And they feel free everywhere (Informant 4).

He (her son) finished high school in only 2 years with very good results, because his focus was exact on the study, but actually he lost the social part. (...) It is very important to be together academic level and social interaction. (Informant 4)

Those who think that children are human becoming in need of protection, consider childhood as a learning period in which children are acquiring skills and competences through formal adult-oriented activities. These are required for becoming what they understand by good adults. Both informants have no working prospects and left their countries due to their economic situation. They see formal education as a key to success, but also a mean to get discipline.

She (her daughter) is going to kindergarten (in Romania). I know this is the best for her. I see she is happy and with other kids in an education system that is much better than the Norwegian. In Norway they only play, they don't learn (Informant 1).

They (Norwegians) do drugs, they make sex on an age very free, on 16 years it is the first country (...) and I don't agree, they are children, Jesus!, and they must learn, you must make them make something good, to write, to do sports . (Informant 3)

### *Theme three: Acculturation*

Acculturation refers to the process that the mothers coming from Romania have faced as well as the Norwegian society, due to the interaction of their cultures. The way these individuals and groups handle the cultural clash will determine psychological and sociocultural outcomes (Berry, 2005).

#### *Subtheme: Acculturation strategies*

Among the factors that influence the balance between cultural maintenance and adaptation, Berry identified the origin and host society cultures, voluntariness of migration, orientations towards immigration, individual perception of discrimination and policies (2006: 24).

Through the narratives, there can be identified three acculturation strategies. Separation is shown by the first and third informants who avoid contact with the Norwegian culture and focus on maintaining their heritage. For both, migrating was a way-out of a precarious situation in Romania. They feel they have been thrown-out from their country by the corruption and poverty. Their perceptions of discrimination by the Norwegian society are stressed, as well as their religious faith that they do not recognize within the Norwegian society.

For the first informant, her acculturation strategy was pre-planned and consciously developed. Before moving, she had some pre-ideas about the Norwegian culture that made her to conclude that the only thing this country can offer her is the possibility of saving money. So, she planned to live in Norway as an immigrant worker without interacting with the Norwegian culture. When she became a mother, this attitude of separation towards the host society was reinforced because she sees the Norwegian culture as a threat for her daughter's growth. It is because of her opinion that the Norwegian culture is dangerous, that she sent her daughter to Romania when she reached the schooling age.

The approach she chose shows that she prioritizes the maintenance her culture of origin over having contact with the society of settlement. This decision has psychological and sociocultural effects. Regarding psychological adaptation, her wellbeing has been affected by her decision of separating herself and her family from the Norwegian culture. Her acculturation strategy motivated her decision to protect her daughter from any contact with the Norwegian culture. In this way, her daughter did not go to kindergarten, she did not have any friends and was sent to Romania to attend school. This affects the informant's mental health as separating from her

daughter has caused her to fall on a depressive state. During the interview she showed her sadness by requesting not to be asked for her feelings about the separation. Despite being negatively affected by her acculturation strategy, she believes that her decision was for her daughter's benefit.

It is very hard. My husband and I, have sacrificed a decade of our lives. When we are young and healthy. It has been for our daughter (Informant 1)

I did not want my daughter to get involved in Norway with the culture and system. She did not go to kindergarten. I don't like kindergartens in here. (...) However, I cannot be very bitchy and criticise everything about Norway because I am able to work. It is just their problem. It is their mentality. I respect them but I haven't changed anything. I have my same values, believes (Informant 1).

We speak Romanian at home and we taught my daughter English. She learned at home with songs and games. But she didn't learn Norwegian. She knows more songs than my nephew who went to kindergarten here (Informant 1).

In terms of sociocultural adaptation, the first informant presents an ethnic profile characterized by being focused on her own ethnic group and low assimilation and contact with the national group (Berry, et. al., 2006). Since she is working in Norway, one could assume she has integrated in the host society. However, she migrated to later be able to build a life in Romania. Working is not a mean to become a member of the larger society, but to go back to her country of origin. It can be stated that for the first informant there is no social adaptation, in the sense that she doesn't want to be part of a community and work together for a common goal.

This was my objective: to work hard, make money and build a house and a future in Romania. I was sure from the beginning that I did not want to stay in Norway (Informant 1).

In the case of the third informant, not only she adopts a separation strategy, but she also expresses that she would like the settlement society to embrace some values from her culture. She believes that by doing so, the whole society will be benefited. She also stated that the Norwegian society and system adopting some values she agrees with (such as heteronormativity and religiosity), is a condition for her to stay longer in Norway.

(If) I see, a little bit changes in the future, in one, two, three years, I see changes maybe I will stay. Because we (immigrants) are people, we are a lot of people in the future and we don't have anything to see, to do, a little activities, people want a change. Jesus! I must see a change, and the people who kiss, girls, male (homosexual couples), I don't know, for me it is disgusting (Informant 3).

I hope to change something because it is for them, children and everybody, because the Norway if they don't have children very good, just to drink, and it will bad for them, for the society (Informant 3).

In terms of psychological adaptation, she is suffering from stress due to her fears of the Norwegian system. Her opinions on the settlement society culture, values and system affect her wellbeing and the way she interacts with the context.

The second acculturation strategy that is present in the narratives of the fourth informant is integration. She wants to maintain her origin society culture and get in contact with the host society. This informant has voluntarily moved to Norway as she did to Austria in the past. She defines herself as none religious and has a prosperous economy and professional position. In

her narrative, there are not references to the perception of discrimination by Norwegians. She shows that she would like to take part of the Norwegian society, for instance, she studied Norwegian and works in Stavanger. She believes that moving to a new country requires an effort to understand the new culture and system, and to be open-minded to embrace new values. She highly values some aspects of the Norwegian culture and also appreciates others from the Romanian. In terms of psychological adaptation, she shows less stress and sadness than the rest of informants, although she is aware of the challenges of being immigrant.

Our base is there in Romania and also I think for me, for my family, it is very important to have this base because when you move everywhere it is not easy (Informant 4).

I try to discover, and also in Austria I tried, to discover their culture, to know the people, the local people and also here. I think it is for me it is very important to understand the others, and also to understand the culture, and also I am looking to find ok, to let's say I try all the time to see how, what is better here, in different parts and then I hope on one day to go to Romania and share my experiences (Informant 4).

I think there are rules and when you move to a country you need to understand the culture mainly, and also you need to understand the system how it is working (Informant 4).

Regarding the second informant, her strategy is not as clear or does not fit completely in one of the models presented by Berry (2006). However, models do not offer pure categories as people can assimilate in some aspects and handle others differently. She presents low identity with the culture of origin. In this sense, she does not feel part of the Romanian community because, according to her, the values she gives importance are different from those of the Romanian culture. With regards to the Norwegian culture, she appreciates some aspects of it. For instance, she considers Norway a good country to raise her child. She studies Norwegian and has bought a house, which means that she expects to stay in Norway for a long time. Her situation could be regarded as an assimilation strategy, however, she also holds some perceptions of the Norwegian culture and system that make her distrust the host society. She can be adopting a diffuse strategy, assimilating to some aspects (mothering practices, educative methods ...), but separating from others (friendships, institutions...). Among the factors that could have influenced her strategy is the fact that she voluntarily moved to Norway, she perceives discrimination by Norwegians, feels frustrated with her unemployment situation and defines herself as none religious.

I don't have so many relationships with Romanians. Neither when I was living in Spain. It is nothing personal. But it is true that I have nothing in common with them. I don't consider I am like all the Romanians. Culturally I am different (Informant 2).

This (Norway) is a good country to grow a child (...) it takes so long to integrate. (...) they are so cold and don't help you to integrate (Informant 2).

### *Subtheme: Perceptions of Norwegian society and culture*

The mothers come from a post-communist country that holds collectivistic values (Shouval, et al., 1986 cited in Strier, 1996:2) where authority, unity and family are stressed over individualistic values that are held by Norway, such as participation, autonomy and individualism.

Through the narratives the differences between the Romanian and Norwegian culture are stressed. The four informants expressed that Norwegians are distant and cold. All agree with the assumption that the Romanian culture embraces more traditional values (such as heteronormativity, discipline, obedience to adults and family centred), while the Norwegian more liberal (values as children participation, freedom, democracy and equality).

Even Norwegian children are cold. In the park, my daughter used to go to interact, to play with them, but they just ran away so afraid because she was speaking another language (Informant 1).

What I have observed in here is that when it is hot, people go out and they say “hello, how are you?” when it is sunny and people are out and they are relaxed they speak to you (...), but they don’t invite you to their houses (...) It is difficult (to be part of the society). I think the average to get to this point is around 5-7 years whereas in Spain it took me a year (Informant 2).

They (Norwegians) are very cold, they are very, ok, they like to smile to you but this is all. I never was invited here in a Norwegian house (...) but in my country, when I lived there, (...) we try to offer them (foreigners) to see them how is our life to offer them to our parties, to integrate them, this is different here (Informant 4).

However, informants differ in how they assess the cultural patterns or values identified as Norwegians. This is influenced by the factors that were mentioned before (such as reason of moving, class, career, age and religion). Those who adopted the separation acculturation strategy and the protection mothering-practices model, undervalue the values identified within the Norwegian society and institutions. They see them as a threat for the society, because they understand a society needs to embrace cultural values that emphasizes discipline, guidance and respect to authority.

The extreme freedom in Norway is threatening family. Norwegians have been raised in this freedom, so they do whatever they want to. Since they are children they think nobody can stop them. For this reason there are many divorced couples. (...) Another thing I don’t like in here is that you do not see people with religious belief (Informant 1).

They gave special weight to the value of spirituality. Their perception of the Norwegian society as not religious leads them to believe that Norway is not a good environment to raise children, as it does not provide them with this meaningful value. The cultural clash identified by them is interpreted as the host society lacking what they consider essential, some values that human beings need to give meaning to their lives.

They (Norwegians) don’t think of life. They want to live, to get distraction and for them this is life. Most of them, not everyone, but the most of them this is the life: to stay, to drink and... (...) Norwegian persons they are not religious! They don’t believe in nothing and for this problem they are so crazy because (...) it (religion) is the most important because we must hear something, we must believe in something to have a little bit, to be human person (Informant 3).

They (Norwegians) are like animals, they don’t believe in nothing, (...) they are like Vikings a little bit like modern, but are the same, they don’t believe in nothing, only in nothing but are stronger and proud (Informant 3)

Those who represent the children participation mothering-practices model value highly the identified as Norwegian cultural values. These are in line with their opinions on what their children need in order to grow well, as well as their personal values.

Norway is a good country to live. I think you can have a good experience after a period of time, if you have friends, people you have things in common with (Informant 2)

But if you want to be part of the society (in Norway), and you want to work, you can have the minimum, the salary, and this, the minimum salary offers you a good life (...) I think when a country is developed, ok, to be a developed country means that you need to offer to everybody an opportunity, the same opportunity actually, no an opportunity, to have the same opportunity, access at least for a level and the children to feel this, and the family who needs it to feel it, but it is hard (Informant 4).

The informant identifies the Norwegian values of equality and civic rights' recognition and thinks highly of it, because they fit with her own opinions about how a state should work. With the extension of citizenship, social policies became a core element and decisive to nation state formation. Norway is an example of a country that decided to go further than tackling poverty addressing more aspects of inequality by combining universality and generosity (Kangas and Kvist, 2013). So, there was an evolution in the provision of the Welfare State from material needs to civic rights.

Nevertheless, during the communist regime, the Romanian state interfered in citizens' lives by subsidizing prices on basic goods, employment, health and education provision, in exchange of obedience (Deacon, 2010: 4). The following Welfare State inherited aspects from communism, such as state paternalist interference and obedience (Kornai, 2002: 16). Also, as Deacon et al., (2010) stated, in Romania, means-tested family benefits seek further eligibility rather than ensuring a minimum-income. This shows the paternalistic character of communism rather than the right-based democracy.

The acculturation strategy that the informants identified in the host society is a melting-pot (Berry, et al., 2006). Over the narratives, informants expressed their opinions on the Norwegian society and institutions trying to assimilate immigrants to their culture.

People interfere in your relationship with your children. In the park, my daughter was climbing a hill and I was behind her in case she would fell. There was a lady who knew we were immigrants, she came and told me that nobody had died in that park. I didn't say anything to her, to her kid who was on the floor and she didn't do anything (Informant 1).

This assimilation strategy they perceive from the Norwegian society and institutions is emphasized with regards to mothering. Through the narratives informants expressed that health professionals, teachers or neighbours told them how to raise their children in what they consider a right way in terms of feeding or clothing. Informants identified the Norwegian taken-for-granted values in mothering within their interaction with the society and institutions. This refers to Kriz and Skivenes' (2010) findings regarding CWS professionals who seem to expect immigrant parents to assimilate for the integration of their children.

*Subtheme: Perceptions that the mothers think the host society has of them*

The acculturation strategy mothers decided to take is also affected by their perceptions of discrimination by the host society (Berry, 2005). In this sense, the informants that adopted the separation strategy are the ones who feel more discriminated. As it was stated by Berry et al., (2006:14), immigrants who feel discriminated by the society of settlement tend to separate themselves and do not try, as much as those with national profile do, to participate in the new culture. They feel that Norwegians do not see them as citizens in equal terms, but as people who either come to Norway to make trouble or to work for them.

They (Norwegians) have a Romanian or somebody to clean the house and they stay with their pussy up, they don't do anything (Informant 3).

When you say you are Romanian they (Norwegians) think you are a gypsy. This is because the government use the term Romanian for us and Roma for the gypsies. They should be called gypsies. People are confused and this can lead them to discriminate us. I am not racist but Roma people do wrong things (Informant 1).

This feeling towards Roma and Romanian communities has been stated by Stephens (2015), who identified both groups as the most unwelcomed by the Norwegian society. Norway has been known for solidarity, universality and kindness towards immigrants (ibid.). However, those coming from non-Nordic countries could be seen as more different to the host society culture, so their integration is considered more challenging (Moore, 2010). The fact that difference has been stated to be identified as a challenge, reflects on the assimilationist approach that the host society is perceived to adopt.

The concept of trust is also linked to discrimination in the way that immigrants do not feel trusted by the society of settlement. They feel discriminated to access resources or claim their rights due to the feeling of not being trusted. For instance, the third informant talked about trust among Norwegians but distrust towards immigrants. At our first meeting, she said that landlords or employers ask for references to other Norwegians about foreigners before hiring or renting a property to them. Institutions are also thought to trust a Norwegian over a foreigner, for example in the case of the CWS report. This shows her idea about a host society that bears distrust and suspicion. According to her, immigrants are not trusted by locals so they are more likely to be reported to institutions or not access resources. There is, therefore, a perception of “we” vs. “the others” instead of a community.

The second informant spoke about discrimination in the working market. The idea of a close Norwegian society appears again with regards to employability.

It is very difficult to integrate. They don't help you with the language. The place where you can learn a language is a workplace and if you get a job where the 98% are foreigners, where the hell are you going to learn the language? (...) Norway is a country that tries to protect its national work market. Immigrants are discriminated from good positions (Informant 2).

Researcher: what is the image people have of Romanians?

Informant 2: Bad. Generally bad and it is starting to be bad in here too. Although people who come here they are up level, it has started to come here people who don't have high education. There are two worlds: some people that are lower in terms of education and other people who are highly educated, work in good positions and come from the country with a contract.



Therefore, mothers believe that the image that Norwegians have of Romanians is affected by the Roma community and those Romanians with a lower status.

The fourth informant did not speak about discrimination or perceptions that Norwegians have of Romanians. She never used the word “immigrant” to refer to herself, her family or the Romanian community living in Norway. She identified herself as an “expat”. The use of this term instead of “immigrant” is relevant with regards to how this informant craft her “self” and the categories that she uses in her narrative to show her identity.

We, my family, we are expats. We have been living in Austria. We were living there 4 years and then, 3 years ago, we moved here (...) and our experience is with an international system. The people like us, coming from different countries, came here and they stay for a limited period (Informant 4).

“Expat” is an informal short adjective for expatriate, a word that, according to the Collins English dictionary, means: “resident in a foreign country. A person who lives in a foreign country, exiled or banished from one’s native country”. However, immigrant is “a person who comes to a country in order to settle there”. The fourth informant does not feel she exiled from Romania, she has chosen to move but she thinks Romania is her base and will go back in few years. I suppose she uses expat instead of immigrant because she wants to emphasize the fact that she is not going to settle in Norway, as she stated “stay for a limited period”.

#### *Subtheme: Social capital*

Through the narratives, this concept is directly affected by informants’ perceptions of Norwegians and the reasons they migrated.

In this way, those who moved to Norway for economic reasons present a weak social capital, meaning few social networks. The first informant is not concerned about not having this kind of support. In her opinion, she came to Norway to work as much as she can, so at this stage of her life friendship comes after saving money.

I have my sister and brother in law, we are a small family. I have few friends. They are immigrants too. I met them working. Of course, I would like to have more friends and go out, but we are here to work. We are like horses (Informant 1).

The social capital she counts on is bonding (Putnam, 2000), so people who are living in the same situation to her. It can be stated that she seeks support and empathy (“getting by”), but not access to resources or social mobility by contacting locals (“getting ahead”), perhaps because she does not want to stay in Norway. Another reason she does not seek bridging capital could be her perceptions of Norwegians. It is unlikely that a person looks for support among people whose culture or life style she disagrees with.

The third informant came to Norway because she worked in Romania without being paid due to the corruption. Therefore, she felt obliged to migrate. The perceptions she has of Norwegians as people who are “empty” and only “care about their desires”, makes her to be more reticent to look for friendships among them.

Researcher: Who do you share your problems with?

Informant 3: (she points at the virgin)

Researcher: So, you don’t ...

Informant 3: I don't have anybody. No. Norwegian persons, these friends have my husband with help to get a job but he is an old person, (...) but like this, he is very to distraction, to drink...

The only relationship with a Norwegian she mentions has a bridging character, but not friendship. She showed she has a richer bonding capital having met other immigrants who live under similar circumstances.

However, the mothers who can have a good life in Romania moved to Norway for other reasons, such as better working conditions, travelling and the education system. Although they agree with the perception that Norwegians are cold, they think highly of some cultural values of the host society and make an effort to get to know Norwegians. Nevertheless, both reached the conclusion that having friendships with Norwegians is difficult and have found more friends among the international community. This makes the second informant emphasize the "cold" Norwegian character, but the fourth considers it to be natural as there are more empathy and closeness among immigrants.

Regarding this bonding capital, the fourth informant has a rich network composed by well-off foreigners who share her family situation. To access resources she does not count on Norwegians (bridging capital) but the support she receives from the international company her husband works for. The second informant counts on a rich bonding capital due to her experiences studying and working with people who shared her reality. She stated she is willing to "get ahead", but considers it difficult to have bridging capital to support her in her job search. In this respect, her perceptions of a Norwegian community discriminatory, assimilationist and close are so strong.

I only have one Norwegian friend from university but we see each other just once in a while. But I don't have, they are not friendly (...) I don't think I have friends in here after so long time. In Spain, I went on the street and found people and we became friends (Informant 2).

I miss my friends sometimes but I have already the same (expat) life for almost ...we didn't have any friends when we arrived, also when we moved to Austria. But it wasn't a problem for us, we made a lot of friends everywhere, but not only from Romania also from...expats majority. Also in Austria, it (friendships with locals) was difficult too, but in an international community it is ok, especially from the jobs. We have the same life, because, ok, the people who are living in the same country for all their life cannot understand us (Informant 4).

#### *Theme four: Trust in the Welfare State*

After the fall of the communist regime, eastern European countries developed their welfare regimes differently from the old EU countries. Eastern-European regimes would have inherited from communism, paternalist states that interfere in citizens' private lives (Kornai, 2002: 16). However, as it can be extracted from the narratives, this interference is to satisfy basic-material needs. The state is entitled to intervene in private issues regarding the provision of goods, basically to tackle poverty and famine, but not to promote the exercise of civil rights such as participation.

They (children in Romania) are not taken from their parents. They are, ok, “so the children must stay with their parents”, so, ok there are some people with the heart good to help them (Informant 3).

The third informant refers to the fact that out-of-home measures are rarely taken by the CWS in Romania. With “there are some people with the heart good to help them”, I assume she refers to organizations that give humanitarian help. The only needs that are considered to be satisfied with the interference of a third party (civil society or state) are material. Children’s participation and other rights recognized by the CRC (1989) are not seen as a public issue. This is linked to the conceptualization a mother or a country (policy-makers, professionals and a society) holds of children that was exposed before.

Corruption is a reality in Romania (European Commission, 2014) that is identified by all the informants in their narratives. The fact that the state is guilty of dishonest practices and cannot be trusted by its citizens is one of the reasons two of the informants moved. The current economic scenario in Romania of corruption and precariousness not only was hopeless, but was affecting their psychological and physical health. The previous experiences people have had with the authorities affect their level of trust in a system.

I worked 10 hours every day approximately and I have a salary very cheap and 6 month I don’t have payment (...) There is a lot of corruption in Romania. If you know somebody, you have money in the pocket and you are hired...yes or the girls make something else (...) (...) We have a lot of parliamentarians (...) and everyone steals, steals, steals, steals and the people don’t have to drink, to eat, nothing, to live and we, we, I am very tired to say this because we have a very beautiful country (Informant 3).

Here in Norway you don’t need to get stressed. But in Romania you put the head in the pillow and you think “what can I do tomorrow, what can I put on the table, what can I do to eat, to drink, I don’t know how many money I have to pay the bills” (...) My mom died of heart disease (...) she didn’t smoke, she didn’t drink, she eats vegetables, she was a person...but the only problem in Romania is the stress (...) I said “I don’t have money to eat, drink to everything and I must quit and find something else to have a little money” (Informant 3).

The first informant also identified corruption as one of the reasons why she decided to move to Norway. According to her, it is difficult to have a “decent” life in Romania, even if you have studied a degree, due to the corruption.

The second and fourth informants also recognized that corruption is a reality in Romania. However, they moved motivated not only by the higher income they can earn in Norway but for other reasons. Both recognized that they could go back to Romania and find a job that allows them to live there. Both studied a Master and had lived in more countries.

I moved because I had the opportunity, I wanted another experience in terms of education. I didn’t like the Romanian educative system. In some universities you had to fuck the professor to pass the exam. Or paying the exam. I didn’t want to take part of that system (Informant 2).

I thought of going back to Romania, things are better there now, I could find a job in my city and earn 500 euros maybe which is not so bad, in my house without paying rent. But the jobs, I imagine I have to work much more hours and the conditions are not good. If I have a son there... here I cannot go to work if he is sick, there who is going to take care of him if he gets sick? For this reason I say that Norway is a great place to have children (Informant 2).

*Subtheme: Health care system*

In the narratives, the mothers' opinions on the Norwegian health care system came up despite not being directly addressed. Most of the informants feel distrust towards this institution based on their own experiences or stories that have heard regarding medical treatment in Norway. Informants did not think that health professionals are competent enough.

The health system here I don't like it too much. (...) I don't need it but I hope I don't, as far as I heard it is not (...) It is too crowded (Informant 4).

I still keep the health card from Spain as I really trust in its health care, not in the Norwegian. (Informant 2).

In two of the narratives, informants identified Norwegian cultural values in the way the health system works. In concrete with the topic of giving birth. Both mothers had a bad experience when they gave birth in Norway. In their opinion, Norwegian health professionals only accept natural birth and on rare occasions agree to have caesareans. According to them, doctors do not take into account the mother's health and opinion.

The Norwegian health care gave therapy to her to overcome her fear of giving birth. She complained as she wanted to have caesarean birth, but, according to her, here in Norway they just wait the baby to come out. She doesn't think she is having more babies after the first experience (extract from fields' notes with the third informant).

I gave birth at the 42nd week of pregnancy. 2 weeks more. (...) they did not want to do an induction. (...) In a sense they oblige you. I heard of a case recently of a girl who got pregnant by in vitro fertilisation and she demanded caesarean. But she told me that it was a very long process. (...) 20 hours of labour trying to give birth naturally. (...) I was dying. The overlege came, who is a superior, she was an islander and she said that I had not dilated enough, I had just 8 instead of 10 (dilatation centimetres) so we should wait 3-4 hours more and she said that it was better to have the surgery. And she was islander, not Norwegian. (...) They offered me a consultant but I went to the consultant and in fact they were trying to convince me that I should, when I am going to have another baby, give birth naturally. (...) I consider that my decision and health was not taken into account and in the moment that I was monitored they didn't pay attention to me. The baby was important, not I. (...) I think that this also has to do with, see, my son he is a product of the Norwegian state not me (Informant 2).

The child-centred approach and permissiveness towards children actions that was negatively criticised by the mothers who represented the protection mothering-practices model, are now identified with regards to the health care by the second informant (who adopts the participation mothering-practices model). It is relevant that she mentions that the only professional who "helped" her to have what she considered to be the best solution (caesarean) was from Iceland. In this sense, the informant overemphasizes the distinctiveness of Norwegian cultural values that are present in welfare institutions and that, according to her, are against users' opinions. It is also relevant that she considers that her child's health was prioritized over hers because he is not an immigrant. This shows her perception of a Norwegian society close and protective towards its citizens and values.

The assimilation strategy that immigrant mothers perceive the host society adopts is present in their narratives about the health system. The majority of the informants see the health care as part of an apparatus that controls immigrant population in order to assimilate them to the Norwegian culture and correct the deviations of the cultural norm through penal measures or

reporting to the CWS. It shows the Foucauldian conception of technologies of power to control the poor.

An example of this was when the second informant showed me a letter she has received from the CWS, saying that they are going to work at the hospital in order to motorize professionals. However, she sees this with distrust and believes that it is an excuse for the CWS to be closer to the families and be able to identify child upbringing they consider wrong and report suspicion of maltreatment.

The support health professionals give to families with a new-born is seen also as a mean of control by this mother, who thinks that the health system interferes too much in private issues such as family planning. Although this mother has a very high opinion on the Norwegian educative system and cultural values in relation to child raising, she considers that the health care is part of an apparatus of control that works on behalf of the children and against families.

They take notes of absolutely everything (...) everything is controlled. I always go to the appointments. I am obedient and I try to adapt to whatever they say because I don't want to have problems. I cannot say that I don't want to vaccinate my son. No. He wouldn't go to kindergarten (if I don't do what they suggest). (...) And also my doctor she controlled me, she told me that we needed to talk about contraceptive methods. (...) and I said but is it compulsory? And she said "it would be good that you use it". I told her I was going to speak about it with my husband and I asked her for an appointment. (...) We decided that it would not be ok to have contraceptives. (...) I said that it was something that we are not doing and she asked me the reason, if it was for religion. I said no. (...) And I think that she interfered too much in my private life (Informant 2).

However, the third informant, who is against the Norwegian education system and thinks Norway is a bad country to raise her daughter due to the culture, sees the support that professionals gave her after giving birth as positive. Despite valuing the help she received, she thinks that the Norwegian Health Care works together with the police and other institutions to make false reports to CWS and take children away from their families. In other words, she also distrusts the system.

The system is very good (...) I don't have problems. I gave birth, everyone helped me very good (...) In Romania nobody cares about nobody. You pay in your salary every month you pay to have a good system and you don't have anything (Informant 3).

I like it very much because they give me money to buy something for the baby, (...) they make a lot of things for the babies, very good, they are 10 for this. After three days, she (nurse) comes, somebody to see the baby, which place I stay, if I have everything to offer to her...She asked me some questions and I responded. It is very good because they cared for the people, for the children and it is very ok. The only problem I have with them is to not take the children from the families (Informant 3).

### *Subtheme: Education system*

In line with the research on school satisfaction among immigrant and Norwegian children carried out by Grødem (2008), the first and third informants' narratives revealed that immigrant mothers understand education as a necessary resource to success in the host society.

Both believe that nowadays having a degree in Romania does not suppose better working conditions. The first informant did not study because of this assumption, and the third got a degree but she had a precarious employment in her country of origin. However, the first thinks that the current changes in the government will bring different prospects for Romania and people with higher education will be able to succeed. Both give a lot of weight to formal education and want their children to study in order to have the desired life they could not. As Grødem (2008) stated, immigrant parents put more expectations on children with regards to grades and encourage them to work harder to achieve the status they could not. In this sense, the only mother who did not go to university has the clearest opinion about the future she wants for her daughter.

My daughter will study at university and could work in the profession she decides because things are changing in Romania. I believe that there will be a future because we have a new president who is from Germany, and he is doing some things. I don't want for her the same life I have had: migrating and cleaning toilets (Informant 1).

They value formal education not only to get a qualification, but also because it educates students in values they agree with. Discipline, obedience and competition are valued identified in the formal education and valued for their children upbringing. However, these values are not present in the Norwegian education system. In Norway, the culture of children participation and negotiation is also embedded in the educational institutions that prioritize equality over academic performance. As Kriz and Skivenes (2010) stated, the concept of sameness is present in the Norwegian institutions and social life. Also, the concept of democratization and children's participation influence the way the education system works, giving priority to playing and activities in which children can give meaning to their worlds by themselves without adult interference (Sommers et al., 2010).

Thus, it is in the education system where the cultural clash can be identified again. Values of discipline, obedience and competition vs. participation, freedom and sameness confront in the mothers' narratives. The Norwegian approach to education acknowledges children's capabilities and aims to help students to develop them by minimising adults' interventions. Playing is seen as a tool to help children to discover their capabilities and agency (Sommers et al., 2010). However, mothers that consider children as human becoming who need to be guided towards a competent adulthood, do not agree with this approach. They see it as a threat to children learning because it can make indifferent and incompetent children.

I don't like kindergartens here. Children only play. I don't think they learn things. All they do is playing outside, even when it is raining like hell. Also teachers in the kindergarten they are like shepherds. They are there just watching out but they do not interact with children, they don't teach and guide them (Informant 1).

When the first informant said "I do not think they (children) learn things", she was making reference to what she expects to be part of the academic curricula in kindergartens, to the specific outcomes she believes children should learn, such as reading, painting, writing.... According to her, these competencies that should be taught in kindergartens and schools, would help children to achieve what she considers a successful future: going to university and work in a qualified profession. However, the activities that are developed in the Norwegian kindergartens have a different objective which are children's participation and development of their own skills and capabilities.

Therefore, in their narratives on the education system not only their conceptualizations of children appear again, but also those of adaptive adult (Strier, 1996) with regards to the

socializing agents that work in kindergartens. Their idea is an adult that guides children instead of letting them to discover themselves.

They (students) are very slow but this is the system. Ok, I don't agree nor disagree but it is their system. (Informant 3)

The education system is not so good. Have you seen how Norwegians write? Even adults, they write and eat so bad, with their hand bent. (Informant 1)

In both extracts, informants show their distrust towards the education system because of the methods they use. The mothers do not believe those will help their children to achieve the outcomes that they, as mothers, understand as desirable. They value formal education in which students are expected to do homework because they believe this is the way children learn, and also because it educates them in discipline and obedience to authority. The fact that the Norwegian system does promote homework for children is seen as a threat to their upbringing. They see it as a lack of guidance and discipline that can have negative consequences in students.

Yes, activities, very good, because the mind if you don't have this (activities), the mind takes to bad things (...) Drugs, parties and to be with the guy or the girl (homosexuality) (Informant 3).

For the second and fourth informant, the Norwegian education system fits with their conceptualization of adaptive adult, good childhood and children's needs and rights. Both had a bad experience with the Romanian education system, either for its violent methods or academic pressure. In their opinion, the Romanian education system is corrupted and does not help students to be autonomous in life. For them, being autonomous does not mean to have theoretical knowledge, but personal skills. Their statements are in line with the Norwegian education culture that promotes equality, democracy, negotiation and participation. They understand an adaptive adult as a person who accompanies, does not guide, children in their personal process of self-discovery and development.

(In Romania) Children are under a lot of pressure also because of the parents and the school. (...) parents, spent a lot of money with this private lesson and actually children have no free time because they are in the morning 6, 7 hours in the school and then they have 3 or 4 hours with the private teachers to learn something and then a lot of other activities and they don't have free time, and when they graduate they know only to study, nothing they don't know about what is happening in the world, how it is and so on (Informant 4).

They (Romanian system) have competitions for each subject (...), my son was in grade five because he was very good, all the teacher wants to have him in the competition because they are rewarded (...) this competition was mainly on Saturday or Sunday and it also starts from November until April, and he had no free Saturday or Sunday (Informant 4).

I can see what important this (Norwegian) system is when people try to be different (...) I think this is the way. I think all of us have a strong point or how to say?, something we are really good and if you develop this part but also the others and when you are not so good you are encouraged to improve a bit, it is really important (Informant 4).

Therefore, the informant gives more importance to children free time to develop their social and artistic skills, over doing homework or participating in competitions organized by adults.

I agree with that (Norwegian system) because the boy should develop his artistic side to be competent in life because in my case what I learned at school didn't help me to manage in life. In the (Romanian) schools they impose you religion, they impose you...it depends on your social network, or your parents, or how your parents are, there are some who are very communist. (Informant 2)

The second informant highly values the Norwegian system, this was one of the reasons she stayed in Norway and believes it is a good country to raise her child. According to her, the values that the Romanian system embraces are rooted in communism, paternalism and obedience that Aidukaite also identified in the post-communist welfare regimes (2011). Notwithstanding with her liking of the Norwegian education system, she distrusts it with regards to equal treatment between Norwegian and foreigner candidates. She would like to apply for a PhD, but strongly believes that the positions are given to Norwegians. Therefore, she is showing again that she agrees with the methods and values students are raised, but distrusts the system due to her perceptions of discrimination.

Informants who disagree with the Romanian education system would rather their children go to university. Nevertheless, they do not think that higher and formal education are the only paths in life.

#### *Fifth theme: Child Welfare Services (Barnevernet)*

Participants brought the topic of the CWS referring by its Norwegian term "Barnevernet". Although they have not had any contact with this institution, all of them were aware of the current controversy with regards to its intervention with immigrant families after last November when the Bodnariu case took place. Informants referred to it and shared the experiences that friends or known people have had with the CWS. It was the theme that prevailed across the data and which there was more ambivalence with.

Regarding the themes presented before, the four narratives showed two models of acculturation, two models of mothering practices and conceptualization of childhood and children. Both models were personalized by the first and third informant on one side, and the second and fourth on the other. As far as the CWS is concerned, there is more ambivalence that will be shown through subthemes. It is the only theme where the second informant mostly agrees with the first and third, and disagrees with the fourth.

#### *Subtheme: CWS role*

With the Child Welfare Act of 1992 there was a shift from protection to promotion of rights and wellbeing in the CWS. Despite its approach being family-therapeutic, its perspective is child-centred as this quote from the Minister of Children and Equality (Skivenes in Gilbert et. al., 2011: 154) emphasizes:

The child (shall) be put first in all assessments the Child Welfare Agency undertakes. Children are, thus, seen as part of a family but individuals in their own right (Skivenes in Gilbert, Parton and Skivenes, 2001:155).

From the data, it can be seen that the majority of the informants disagree with the CWS role. The main opinion is that the CWS must work for the protection of children who have special needs, or those who are raised with violence or drug-additions. One of the reasons why mothers



consider that the protection of children instead of their welfare should be considered in the political agenda, could be their conceptualization of childhood and adaptive adult. Understanding adults as providers instead of advocates for children participation and rights, would make difficult for mothers to see the role and approach of the Norwegian CWS.

All the informants agree with the figure of the CWS as an institution that helps children in need. According to the first and third informants, children in need are those deprived from material resources or who are brought up with violence, drugs or alcohol. The second informant refers also to children with disabilities.

The recognition of children as individuals with own rights by the CWS, can be in conflict with mothers' conceptualization of children as dependent on the family. The collectivistic post-communist values that prioritize family as an institution over individuals, are present in the third informant's narrative.

They must leave the children with the families (...) Ok, if there are cases with drugs, drinkers, they must take them. But I don't know, the children, some children they make... I don't know, they say "mama screamed on me and beat me", but it is not true (Informant 3).

From this extract it can be seen an insistence on working with a family-centred approach and maintaining children in their families. The last quote shows how this informant gives more importance to parents' accounts because she considers that children cannot be trusted as they can exaggerate things to achieve something. This is opposed to the current discourses on children in Norway, that identify them as competent informants whose voices carry weight (Hollekim, et. al., 2015:6).

The second informant who agrees with the child-centred approach and her conceptualization of good childhood is in line with that from the Norwegian society, does not see the CWS as a system to protect children and promote their wellbeing. She agrees with the third informant on the CWS integrated in a system composed by other public institutions (such as education system, health care and security forces) with the purpose to take children. The reason behind this is, in her opinion, economic. She believes that the foster care system needs children to be given to families in exchange for money.

If I could I would delete it (CWS) or give it another form. Because I think there is a business behind and I believe they are not working as they should. There should be a consensus, to understand the other side, the family (...) there are big interests. I saw a lady, she goes to a church and she has a child. She doesn't work. She is English, but she is adapted, she knows the system so well, I think she has more than a child who are adopted. I think there are economic reasons (Informant 2).

She speaks about "economic reasons" referring to the amount that foster families receive to finance the child's needs. She is showing distrust towards the institution of foster care and suspicious of families being foster-families for the money and not for children care.

Other reasons that the third informant believes in are that Norwegian families need healthy children from immigrants due to Norwegians' incapacity to have healthy babies, and also homosexual couples who are allowed to raise children.

I think that immigrant children are taken. I think because most Norwegian are very with problems, because the moms are drinking, not all but, and in time if the body is with drinks and with cigarettes you cannot make healthy children (...) and they don't make healthy children and they say "ok we will pick it (immigrant children) up these

because it is more healthy”, because Latin women here are more more healthy because they don’t like very much to drink, smoke, to stay in disco, to stay at night (Informant 3).

If they like a children, they make a report false. Because they want the children and this is enough. The police don’t take, don’t say to stay with me. (...) They have part area with police, with them with Barnevernet (...) because they don’t have population (...) because they take children from the parents and take them for the gays (Informant 3).

The narrative of the third informant is so powerful with regards to the role that according to her the CWS has. It is in the role she identifies, where the cultural clash regarding Norwegian and Romanian values is again emphasized. Norwegian values of equality (same rights for hetero and same sex couples) and individualism (individual rights), do not match with this mother ideology. She identifies those within the institutions and interpret them as a threat to her ideal of family and childhood.

People (homosexuals) who kiss, girls, male, I don’t know for me it is disgusting (...)I want to see a man and a women ok, it is love, ok, I approve (it), they are loving it is normal (...) animals do it: female with masculine, no see female with (...)I respect them because if they don’t give a shit for nobody it is ok, but not in my face (...) But they are a creation of God, I don’t know, or devil (Informant 2).

Her opinion towards homosexuality is very clear. She is completely against it. This opinion can be influenced by her religious faith. In the last quote she refers to homosexuals as “creation of God or devil”, that is to say, she uses religious constructs to give meaning to this phenomenon.

These findings have been so relevant because after reading the literature regarding immigrant families’ interaction with the Norwegian CWS, I expected that the opinions against this institution were based on the assumption that it standardizes the middle class taken-for-granted values for parenting, and serves to assimilate immigrants to the Norwegian practices. It has been surprising to find opinions against the CWS because it is thought to be a system that works as a “mafia” (word used by the second informant) to reclude children for the economic benefit of foster families or to help unhealthy or homosexual Norwegians to have their desired family.

This shows the cultural clash. Informants come from a culture that embraces different values, so when they move into the society of settlement they discover a society that gives different meanings to phenomena (homosexuality, for instance). They place these meanings as the reasons behind the way an institution works. With regards to homosexuality, Romania has been very conservative. There has been some progress in the legislation with anti-discrimination laws, but rights as marriage or adoption are still denied to these communities. (Retrieved from <http://www.equaldex.com/region/romania> ). Coming from this context, the third informant does not accept that homosexual couples are entitled to the same rights as heterosexuals. In her opinion “it is not love”, “it is not natural”, and so, it is not right. Also, her collectivistic values and conceptualization of children lead her to not accept the role that the CWS has which advocates for individual rights.

The fourth informant is the only one who sees the CWS as an institution that helps families and children due to the experience a friend of hers had. As it was presented before, she has adopted an integration approach. Moreover, her conceptualizations on children and adaptive adult are different from the first and second informants. In her opinion, the CWS works for children’s wellbeing and protection. Despite agreeing on the same conceptualization of children and

adaptive adult, the second informant is afraid of the CWS. This will be explained in “reasons behind their feelings”.

### *Subtheme: Feelings towards CWS*

The main feelings towards CWS among the narratives were fear and distrust.

I am afraid of this (CWS) but why am I afraid? Because if they like a children, they make a report false (...) I live with the stress every day, I told you the first day, with fear. (Informant 3)

I am afraid of hiding, he has bruises on the skin, I don't make them, it is him, he falls down, and I am afraid of that, of they asking what this is. Previously to go to the hospital with him I am very careful, I see if there is anything (...) but I think I am ready if something (report) happens. I have the phone number of that lady who is a lawyer. I had made a plan in my mind. (Informant 2).

The feeling of fear is shared by the second and third informants. The first informant does not feel afraid because her daughter is not living in Norway. Nevertheless, she mentioned that friends of hers are so afraid of the CWS that have sent their children to Romania. She felt she did the right thing sending her away in the view of the current situation. So, she distrusts the CWS. Fear is a real feeling towards the CWS and it is affecting mothers' wellbeing and children's lives. In some cases, children are being sent away from their parents, and those who stay in Norway are at risk of isolation and discrimination in terms of resources' access. The mothers are afraid of health care, the education system and other institutions that can report to the CWS, so they avoid any contact or do not make the most of the services on offer.

Informants are aware of the negative consequences of being under this fear, so they have taken some measures. The second informant has planned a strategy in case she has to face an intervention from the CWS. The third informant is participating with more families in a project that seeks to meet professionals from the CWS, as well as policy makers, for a change in their decision-making.

I hope to fix something with Barnevernet (...) There is a politician from Prague and then he is a lawyer who wants to make it everything down with Barnevernet and he also is a Norwegian (Informant 3).

The feeling of distrust is not only prompted by the confusion with protection and welfare and the child-centred approach, but by the reporting system.

They (CWS) are failing. See, a neighbour can report too. If they see you having a glass of wine and then grabbing your kid on his arm, they can call. It has happened. (Informant 2).

The first informant distrusts also this reporting system because, according to her, people could misuse it and report to the CWS just to cause harm to somebody they dislike. She does not share the value of trust towards strangers, so it is difficult for her to believe this reporting system could work. The Nordic Welfare regime is based on trust (Fukuyama, 1995). Reflecting on that, it could be said that sharing this value can be challenging for people who come from a country where corruption is normalized, as it was extracted from the narratives.

For the third, the CWS is not trustworthy because children can report and they can exaggerate in order to threaten their parents.

*Subtheme: Reasons behind their feelings*

None of the informants have had experience with the CWS. They based their opinions on the experiences friends or known people have had and told them. Therefore, they are referring to their bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000) and the stories that are spread within it.

It was the experience of a good friend coming from Romania. They moved here also, (...) he committed suicide. I with her went the people for the Barnevernet (...) they came and stay and spend some time with the children, talking with them and also with the mother and they helped them a lot. (...) this is very different, first because in Romania suicide is a crime, everybody tries to judge you and here it is a disease (...) and nobody there helps you (Informant 4).

I was working with (name) and she told me about CWS (...) Later, when I was pregnant and read more about this topic. It was not after the Bodnariu case, it was that I had read more on the internet about what is happening. Also, I was introduced to the topic because I was working for a well-known lawyer of Stavanger that works with Barnevernet cases. (...) And she told me that she is so bad psychically that she cannot bear (working with CWS) it anymore. (Informant 2).

I know a couple who sent in Christmas their three children to Romania (...) this was because of Bodnariu case and also because they had an experience with the kindergarten director because they are very religious and in Romania we have a fasting period during Christmas where you cannot eat meat during 40 days. They asked why the child didn't have meat in the meal box and that he should have. They called the father and told him they should be careful with that. (Informant 2).

Yes, they (CWS) take them (children). I heard something like that from a person who has this problem, I told you the first time, they went to their country (Informant 3).

Fear and distrust towards CWS have been spread since last November with the Bodnariu case.

They (Romanians friends) told me (about CWS) when Bodnariu case appeared. This was the starting point when everything changed. The awareness on Barnevernet changed. And that we took consciousness about this entity that causes lot of harm (Informant 2).

All of them mentioned the Bodnariu case, even though it was not directly addressed. This shows the controversy that this intervention has prompted among the Romanian community. Informants recognized that the voices against the CWS intervention with the Bodnariu family began on social networks promoted by religious communities. Three of them mentioned that a Romanian TV channel broadcast a documentary on the Bodnariu case and other children placed out-of-home by Barnevernet. As Hollekim e. al., (2015) stated, media's discourses on the CWS interaction with immigrant children have been problematized. Informants are aware that media can exaggerate and promote a campaign against the CWS, and some express their need to get reliable information.

This fact also shows the context of mobility or trans-national experience that informants are living. They live in Norway but at the same time they maintain and create networks in Romania. Mothers make use of transnational communication flows thanks to the low-cost airlines and information technology. This means that they maintain and build new networks across international borders. Transnational communication processes refer also to the fact that mothers are getting information from their country of origin from diverse actors. This information influence their opinion forming on a specific topic.

When I went (to Romania) during Christmas time now, it was it is a recent news (Bodnariu). Everybody was scared and then everybody had a different version of this story. And I told them, ok, I have Facebook, because a lot of stories come from Facebook, but then all the time I try to have different sources (...) you need to listen to family, you need to listen to church, you need to listen other people who has experiences with this, you have to listen to those who live here maybe from other nationalities and so on (Informant 4)

There are so many stories in the media. Maybe media are exaggerating about the Barnevernet. But you listen to so many cases and parents get so scared. (Informant 1)

I would like to get to know it (CWS) from reliable sources (Informant 2).

### *Subtheme: Power*

Following Tew's matrix of power relations (2006), most of the informants understood the CWS as an agency that executes power-over families. They saw the power as oppression rather than protection, as the technologies of power are being use to oppress them for being "the others".

At our first meeting, the second informant said that the CWS removes children because it works based on a system of trust among Norwegians. Professionals trust Norwegians who report immigrants and execute their power legitimated by law. She sees two sides: they and us, authority and oppressed. She feels that her position as a young immigrant woman disempowers her ("They see you on the street with your child. You look unexperienced, so they report"). The first informant also identified age and ethnicity as the categories that interact within a system of oppression and discrimination.

As Hennun (2011) stated, the CWS can be seen as a form of governance by the state, which executes power and controls families through their children by technologies of power. In this sense, the CWS would be perceived as executing power-over, but also collusive-power (Tew, 2006) with the purpose to assimilate families to the Norwegian parenting practices. Mothers see power imbalances between parents and children. According to Studsrod et al. (2012), parents show fear because the CWS has a double function of protection and control. They end up feeling powerless because they are submitted to the powerful legal and institutional apparatus that dominates the discourse. This is a paradox for workers too as they work with families, but they are at the same time in a more powerful position.

The CWS can be seen as "field" (Bourdieu) in the sense that it is a system that influences perceptions and actions and has its own rules. Coming from another context, informants can feel in an inferior position to get access to resources in a field they are not acquainted with. They may lack knowledge about how this system works and which rules compose it. This can lead them to a disadvantage position (O'Brien and Ó Fathaig, 2005).

The fourth informant said that it is crucial to get to know the society of settlement system. However, informants who take a separation strategy or hold perceptions of Norwegians as being very distant and different, think that it is difficult to get closer to the system. This distance can be a factor that promotes their belief in the stories spread within their boding capital about unfair welfare institutions.

The second informant identifies a threatening system with resources and legitimacy to execute power-over. From her perspective, professionals are seen as having rights and using scientific discourse about children as a powerful tool. They work with dialogues to educate parents which

are based on an established conceptualization of ideal parenting. Therefore, these dialogues can be seen as technologies of control (Foucault, 1988), that lead to two narratives: deviation or normativity. In these dialogues parents and children are in different positions. Children are empowered as individuals with own rights who demand certain parenting practices. Their confidences are assigned more power within the CWS, and professionals recognize their own intervention towards parents to discipline them, so as to adopt what the Norwegian society has agreed as acceptable parenting.

Professionals should handle the balance between the state mandate and their commitment to the field. They are directly and indirectly formed by the power. This shows the concepts of governmentality and self-work (Foucault, 1980 cited in Brottveit et al., 2015: 3), because workers can feel that the governmental guidelines do not meet their assessments or the decision they think would ensure the best interest of the child. In other words, from a Foucauldian perspective, Welfare States could be seen as technologies of control that operate based on an idea of what a good life is like in order to educate and discipline the poor. Then, the CWS could be understood as a system that standardizes parenting practices rooted in the taken-for-granted truths, which are imposed by those who have access to more resources in society.

Informants felt that the host society has the capacity and legitimacy to impose their values. This is done by justifying that those are the right values, and they, immigrants, are not going to be listened to, because they are not part of the larger society neither intervene with the field.

They (Norwegians) are very proud. “Oh! I made a mistake, what do you mean? I am Norwegian I have the power” The Norway is the country with the most power in the world (Informant 3).

The perception of power-over is shown by the first informant as well, expressing that institutions (kindergartens and the CWS), pretend to assimilate parents in the Norwegian culture. Therefore, she thinks they work to eliminate the difference. Despite these opinions, informants showed they were aware of their agency to execute power. For instance, the third informant participates in a project that seeks to promote change in the CWS. Also the fact that she spoke out at the kindergarten regarding to the way the staff was treating her child, shows that she feels she has agency. The second informant also recognizes her agency in the planning of a strategy in case of report.

In the beginning they (kindergarten’s staff) didn’t change the pampers, but I speak with them and they understand. I told them, because (if you don’t change the pampers) it makes a ... on the skin. I told them, “you must change it if you want, if not I will take her to another barnehage (kindergarten in Norwegian) (...) In the beginning they were upset to me because I told them (Informant 3).

I am ready if something happens. I have the phone number of that lady who is a lawyer. I had made a plan in my mind. (...) My dad was here. And he is very worried (...) He said: do you want to live with the fear that maybe they take your son? See, I don’t see that so bad because I don’t think I am doing things bad (Informant 2)

In the extract above, the second informant stated that she does not feel they can execute power-over because she is not “doing things bad”. From this, it can be identified the assumption that, even though she said she is afraid, she understands that the CWS intervenes when children are in need and this is not her son’s case.

The fourth informant also pointed out that she does not feel power-over because she ensures that the CWS cannot disagree with how her daughter is being raised. So, she is aware that there are some expected mothering practices that match with hers.

## Research questions

The themes and subthemes identified in the data collected would serve to shed light on the research questions that guided the study.

- How do immigrant mothers from Romania give meaning to their life-worlds within a context of mobility?

Across the narratives there were different meanings participants gave to their life-worlds, influenced by several factors that interact in their complex experiences.

The voluntariness to migrate was a significant factor that influenced how the women constructed their narratives about themselves. Informants who felt victims of the corruption and poverty in Romania, understood migrating as a way-out from a country that cannot offer a good quality of life. They gave meaning to their experiences as having fled from a hopeless life. They understood their new life as an undesirable migration with the purpose of being able to work, saving money and going back to Romania. The religious beliefs and the values they hold, based on their culture of origin, are in conflict with those encountered in Norway. They face this cultural clash by taking refuge in the meanings their culture of origin provides to understand their life-worlds. In this process, they seek support within social networks among the immigrant community. They also use transnational communication and Romanian media to make sense of the experiences they live. At the same time, they understand the host society holds values that put at risk their idea of wellbeing.

Informants who could have lived and work satisfactorily in Romania, moved to Norway motivated for other reasons. Among them, getting to know other meanings to social reality that are in line with their own understandings. They give meaning to their experiences as having had the opportunity to live in a society that embraces values they hold. Instead of feeling victims for having migrated, they feel privileged for having the opportunity to get to know another culture. Especially, they feel fortunate to be able to raise their children within a society that understands phenomena such as education, childhood and mothering, in the same way they do. Religious beliefs, previous migration experiences and their own values have affected the way they give meaning to their lives.

- How do immigrant mothers experience mothering with regards the acculturation process?

The way informants experience mothering is influenced by how they understand filiation, childhood and their role as a mother. The conceptualizations of children and mothering are culturally shaped, and this is evident in the sample because the mothers are experiencing an acculturation process. They are exposed to different meanings to phenomena as mothering and filiation. Across the narratives, the identification of the cultural clash within mothering was shown. The mothers expressed the different meanings the socializing agents give to mothering in their origin culture and the host society.

They experienced it as being in the middle of different conceptualizations and having the duty to ensure their children's wellbeing and good upbringing in this context. However, they differed in their opinions of what a good childhood is like, which determines their perceptions of their own role as mothers and the mothering practices they should take.

Mothers who maintained the adaptive adult and children figures from their origin culture, understood children as vulnerable human becoming in need of protection. Based on values of respect for authority and discipline, they experienced mothering adopting a guiding role for their children. These mothers disagree with the identified Norwegian mothering practices, because they see the Norwegian values of freedom and children participation as threatening family cohesion and children's upbringing. Their experiences of mothering are characterized by stress and isolation prompted by the measures they take to separate from the Norwegian culture.

However, informants who assimilate or/and integrate to the host society culture shared meanings with the Norwegian socializing agents. These mothers understood children as human beings with own rights and their role as mothers as advocate for them. They feel supported by welfare institutions and the host society in their doing mothering.

- What are the narratives immigrant mothers construct about welfare institutions that work with families in Norway?

The analysis showed an ambivalence about the role that is expected from welfare institutions. Opinions depended on participants' conceptualization of children and adaptive adult (Strier, 1996). The mothers who took a separation acculturation strategy, understood this role in terms of provision to satisfy children's basic needs. They spoke of children as vulnerable human becoming and adaptive adults as guides and protectors. Those with an assimilation or/and integration strategy, understood the institutions' role in terms of advocacy for children rights. They saw children as human beings with own rights and adaptive adults as advocates.

Among the narratives, the CWS was the institution they mentioned the most. Despite the role mothers expect from the CWS, feelings of fear and distrust prevailed. The CWS was perceived as an institution with the purpose to take children, by mothers who have adopted different acculturation strategies and mothering practices. According to these mothers, the reasons behind this would be the foster care system's economic benefit or the contribution in the national population of Norway. These informants were the ones who felt discriminated. Participants also recognized the positive role that the CWS plays protecting children who are raised by violent, drug-addicted or poor parents.

They identified cultural values that they consider Norwegian in the welfare institutions' work. Values of individualism, participation, freedom, democracy and sameness were pointed out in their narratives. Mothers that adopted a separation acculturation strategy were more critical of these values, as well as the consequences that they would have on their children upbringing and the whole society wellbeing.

Regarding power, the main view was that welfare institutions execute power-over families, especially the health care and the CWS. This is understood to be done by making use of their legitimacy and technologies of power. Collusive-power was also identified in their perceptions of a system that tries to assimilate them. However, those mothers who were afraid of the CWS, were aware of their agency and had thought of a strategy to avoid their children being removed.



- What is the main source of immigrant mothers' knowledge about issues relating to CWS intervention?

None of the research subjects have had a direct experience with the CWS. However, all of them were very knowledgeable of the latest news regarding the CWS intervention with immigrant families that are spread by the media and social networks. Informants brought the topic of the Bodnariu case and referred to the diffusion that Pentecostal churches and Romanian TV channels were doing about it.

Apart from one, all the informants have a relative, colleague or friend who has sent their child back to Romania due to fear of Barnevernet. They supported their opinions on the CWS with the stories they have been told about professionals who are asked to make fake reports to the CWS, parents who are controlled and children who are taken away from their families with no reason. They accentuated the cultural values they have identified as Norwegians to justify the reasons behind the removal of children by the CWS. For instance, values of individualism, freedom, children participation and equality were identified in their narratives within the institutions decision-making. Informants saw these values in contrast with those collectivistic such as family coexistence and respect of adult authority. Therefore, they were promoting an "othering" exercise that showed that they positioned themselves separated from the Norwegian society. The only informant who does not believe in the stories that she has heard on the media about the CWS, did not present her experience in terms of "we" and "others". She adopted an assimilation acculturation strategy and her bonding capital was composed by international families, not only Romanians.

- How do these perceptions affect the way children of immigrant mothers access welfare resources and services?

The perceptions mothers have of the CWS affect directly their children lives. Most of them expressed that they are so scared of being reported that they are very careful when they interact with any institution. This fear leads mothers not to engage with professionals from the health and education systems. They also fear to show their disagreements with professionals' opinions based on the idea of being reported to the CWS. Children are, therefore, discriminated from the use of welfare services. The most drastic outcome of mothers' perceptions of the CWS, is the fact that most of the research subjects stated to know somebody who has sent their children to Romania to avoid the CWS intervention.

Moreover, the perceptions some of them have of the Norwegian culture and society has led to the isolation of some children. Those have been sent to Romania or separated from Norwegians in order to prevent their assimilation to the Norwegian culture, which is seen as a threat for their growth by some of the mothers.

## Chapter Six: Conclusions

The main conclusion of the study is that among the sample, there was a common feeling of fear and distrust towards the Norwegian welfare institutions. The mothers who participated in the research come from a country with a different context and culture. It embraces collectivistic values that shape the way children and socializing agents are conceptualized. These values are present in the configuration of their Welfare State and the role assigned to its institutions. The CPS (Child Protection Services) still prevails based on the idea of adults who have to protect and guide vulnerable children.

When they arrive in Norway, they face the cultural clash in every aspect of their lives. They encounter a society that gives meaning to their life-worlds differently, for instance, putting more weight on individual rights, participation and equality. Some separate themselves from the new culture. Their pre-ideas about a host society that is distant, superficial, and lacks spirituality, discipline and respect, discourage them to get in contact. They stay working and dreaming of going back to an idealized future Romania. The relationships they build are mainly with other immigrants who give same meanings to their experiences in Norway. They base their opinions on the stories they heard about a host society that steals children and the reality portrayed by foreign media.

Others are open-minded to interact with the host society. However, among some of them the fear of institutions is present and the assumption that the Norwegian society has an assimilationist strategy towards immigrants.

During the interviews and observations, the feeling of being an outsider within the Norwegian society stood out. This distance makes the communication between the community and the welfare institutions challenging. Not only is it challenging for families' social adaptation and psychological health, but also for the work of welfare institutions. Particularly, the CWS needs to be trusted in order to work with families for children's wellbeing. However, it is difficult for families to think about an institution that works for wellbeing instead of protection, due to all the complexities that frame their experience. Among the categories that frame their perceptions, trans-nationality is prominent. These mothers live in Norway but make use of transnational communication to get information and support. All the informants mentioned the media and social networks, which shows the great variety of actors involved in the opinion forming processes since the advent of the internet and communication technologies.

I believe that the unawareness from the immigrant mothers I interviewed about the Norwegian "field", can be compared to the same of the Norwegian society towards these mothers' life-worlds. The Norwegian Welfare State faces new challenges with the transformation of its society and the rapid cross-border interconnections. However, not only is it facing challenges, but opportunities. It is in the meeting of differences, when a society has the opportunity to reflect on its own, learn from the differences and explore how to handle acculturation.

The Norwegian society could make the most of the diversity of its population by getting closer to the immigrant community, so as to understand the meanings they give to their experiences. Their voices would help understand why they believe in the stories that portrait institutions as part of a "mafia" to steal children. This understanding is needed because of the consequences that this scenario is having such as isolation and psychological problems. Especially for children who are sent away and are in the middle of different conceptualizations held by their socializing agents.

Getting to know this community is more important now that Norway is facing the spread of fear towards the CWS by different voices. In the last year, there have been demonstrations, protests, campaigns, TV documentaries, articles and programmes propagating the idea that the CWS steals children. There are so many voices involved that demand more researches in order to be able to understand the complexity of the current picture. Why are these voices believed? How do they construct their narratives about welfare institutions? Why do they point at the Norwegian CWS that presents lower rates for out-of-home measures than the rest of the Nordic CWS? (Gilbert, et. al 2011).

In conclusion, the rapid change in the population of Norway presents new challenges for the welfare institutions. In the current context there are people who give meanings to their life-worlds, which appear to contrast expectations about the institutions' role and intervention. Moreover, trans-nationalism and communication technologies complicate the scenario with the interaction of more actors that form opinions. In the middle of this complexity, families struggle with the stories they hear about the host society, their cultural values and individual factors. I designed a graphic to show this complexity that frame the mothers' giving meaning to their life-worlds. Depending on how they handle all these factors, there will be some outcomes such as fear and distrust which can lead to social isolation and stress.

# The complexity within immigrant mothers' giving meaning to their life-worlds

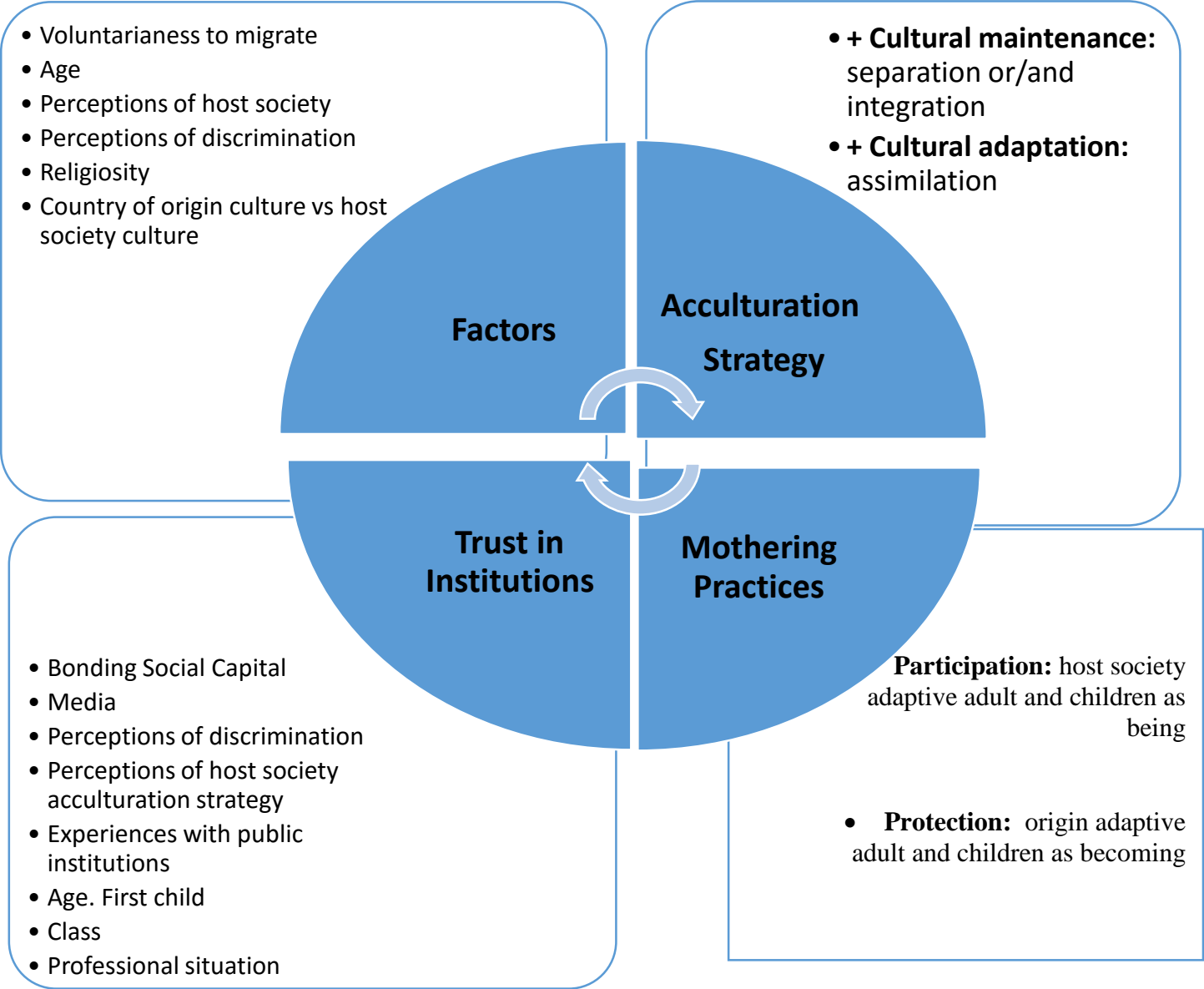


Figure 3. The complexity within immigrant mothers' giving meaning to their life-worlds. From (Herrero, 2016)

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

Cover sheet

Age

Birthdate and place

Life experience

Childhood:

- Family of origin
- Parents: how would you describe them? What have you inherited from them? Religious beliefs
- Memories
- Romania when you were a child

Youth:

- Education: how far did you go with education? Your school memories. View of education in a person's life
- Relationships: friends, organizations, love
- Leisure

Adulthood:

- Leaving home
- Work
- Marriage
- Motherhood: role in your life. Values you try to impart to your children.

Immigration Experience

- Moving: when, why, how was it?
- Life in Norway:
  - How does it differ from the life in Romania?
  - Positive and negative things
  - What do you miss the most from Romania?
  - Is there anything you adopted here and that you think it is good, that you would like the Romanian culture to embrace?
  - Did you feel you have to change things to fit into the Norwegian society? The biggest change: was it difficult, easy...?
- Social Network:

- Who do you go in case of help?
- Norwegians friendships and networks
- Do you have family in Norway?
- Do you usually go to Romania?
- Family life in Norway:
- Do you think Norway is a good country to raise your children?
- Being a mother: is it the same here than in Romania? How are children and parents seen?
- Do you feel you have to change how you raise your children in Norway?
- Norwegian values you have identified within family life. Romanian values: do you see them in the Norwegian culture?
- Norwegian system:
- Institutions to help families: experiences, participation of your children with the institutions
- Feelings and opinions towards them. Why do you feel this way? What do you base your opinions on?
- Do you think you have a say or right to complain if you feel these institutions are unfair?

Future:

- Plans and expectations

Closure:

- Is there anything you have left out and you think should be included in your story?

## Appendix 2

Request for participation in research project

Being an immigrant mother in Norway. Immigrant mothers' perceptions on welfare institutions.

Background and Purpose

This project is the thesis of the Erasmus Mundus European Master in Social Work with Families and Children culminating at the University of Stavanger. It will be carried out by the Master's student Raquel Herrero Arias and supervised by Åse Elisabeth Vagli. The research thesis will be completed by July 1, 2016. The main purpose is to explore how immigrant mothers from Romania experience their realities within a context of mobility. Especially the focus will be on mothering and their perceptions on Norwegian Welfare State Institutions with regards to family issues, as Child Welfare Services.

Your participation in this study is to share your experience as an immigrant mother living in Norway, your experience of mothering in a new country and opinions about its institutions that offer services to families. Your real name will not be used in the final results of the study in order to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality.

What does participation in the project imply?

This is a qualitative study. The data will be collected through semi-structures interviews and observations.

Participants of the study will be asked to have an interview for less than 2 hours. During this interview you will be asked some questions in relation to your experience of immigration, life in Norway and your mothering practices. There will be few questions to guide the interview as the main point is that you give your own account about what you think is important to understand your experience. The observations will be held in natural situations. My purpose is to get an understanding of how you live as an immigrant mother in Norway. All the data that will be collected will be treated confidentially.

You will be given the opportunity to read your own information and give your approval to publish it.

What will happen to the information about you?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Apart from the student researcher, the thesis supervisor is the only person who will have access to the data once it has been transferred. The interviews will be audio recorder in order to make sure that the interviewer has documented the answers. Once the information is transcribed, the audio recorded will be destroyed to ensure privacy and the written data will be store in a computer accessible only to the student researcher.

The field notes will not include any personal names and will be destroyed once the information has been transcribed. The project is scheduled for completion by July 2016.

### Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions, please contact:

Student researcher: Raquel Herrero Arias: [ariasherre@hotmail.es](mailto:ariasherre@hotmail.es). Phone number. 46882757

Thesis supervisor: Åse Elisabeth Vagli: [aase.vagli@uis.no](mailto:aase.vagli@uis.no) Phone number. 51834108

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

## Appendix 3

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate

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(Signed by participant, date)

Student researcher: Raquel Herrero Arias [ariasherre@hotmail.es](mailto:ariasherre@hotmail.es)

Thesis supervisor: Åse Elisabeth Vagli [aase.vagli@uis.no](mailto:aase.vagli@uis.no)

## Appendix 4

Searching for themes: An example of the coding process that was explained in the methodology chapter.

Theme: Conceptualization of children and childhood

Theme: Mothering practices and conceptualization of adaptive adult

Theme: Trust in welfare institutions

Theme: Acculturation strategies and perceptions of the host society

I agree with the protection of the children. Of course, I understand that you must not beat your child. I like that from the Norwegian system, that children are protected. I agree with their protection but not with giving them so much freedom. They are children who need discipline and to be told how to do things. You need to tell your daughter and explain to her things, so she can understand and be independent. However in Norway parents think they have all the time so they do not teach their children. They wait because they think the child will see and learn.

For these reasons, I did not want my daughter to get involved in Norway with the culture and system. She did not go to kindergarten. I don't like kindergartens in here. Although my daughter never went to any, I know the stories from my sister in law and other friends whose children go to Norwegian kindergartens. They are not quite happy about how they treat children. Children only play, play and play, and that is it. I don't think they learn things. All they do is playing outside, even when it is raining like hell, playing in the water, playing... Sometimes, they put this white thing to make foam like shampoo and they play with it and everything is wet. You go then to pick up your kid who is wet and with caca in the nappy.

Also teachers in the kindergarten they are like shepherds. They are there just watching out but they do not interact with children, they don't teach and guide them. I know that from relatives and friends.

You have to teach your kid. Come on! I saw kids in Norway who were 5 or 6 years old and they were wearing nappies, with that dummy and drinking from that milk bottle. When you are 4 or 5 you have to start to eat alone. I think that parents and teachers here are too slow in teaching their kids to be independent. I never liked it, so my daughter never got involved.

The education system is not so good. Have you seen how Norwegians write? Even adults, they write and eat so bad, with their hand bent. Another thing I don't like in here is that you do not see people with faith or religious belief. We are orthodox and religion is important for us.

However, I cannot be very bitchy and criticise everything about Norway because I am here and I am able to work and save money. It is just their problem. It is their mentality. I respect them but I don't have to change because I am here. I haven't changed anything. I have my same values, believes ... I am the same person

## Appendix 5

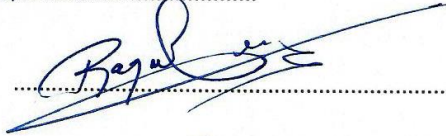
### Non-plagiarism declaration

I hereby declare that the Dissertation titled **Being an immigrant mother 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 ..... 01/05/2016 .....

Signature: .....  .....

Name (in block letters): ..... RAQUEL HERRERO ARIAS .....



## Appendix 6

**Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS**  
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



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4036 STAVANGER

Vår dato: 06.01.2016

Vår ref: 45876 / 3 / MHM

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

### TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 28.11.2015. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 05.01.2016. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

45876	<i>The perceptions of immigrant mothers on the Norwegian Child Protection Services</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	Universitetet i Stavanger, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Åse Vagli
Student	Raquel Herrero Arias

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, 01.07.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren

Kontaktperson: Marianne Høgetveit Myhren tlf: 55 58 25 29

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

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