

Family, Immigration and Policy:

The effects of family reunification policies on Latino-Norwegian families.

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DEDICATION

This master thesis is dedicated to my precious daughter Maria Luciana and my lovely husband Davide. Thank you for being the motor of my life and thank you for giving me strength to achieve my goals.

To our family.

ABSTRACT

Governments issue restrictive immigration policies in their eagerness to protect their nations from the entrance of 'undesired' migrants. However, by toughening policies, individuals without immigrant background and their families may be also affected. For instance, this thesis illustrates how family reunification policies transform the right to have a family into a privilege, generating elitism and restricting the freedom of Norwegians in choosing a non-European partner. This situation, can also increase the number of immigrants with irregular status and intensify the idea of the "undesired poor".

Furthermore, this thesis also shows that more women than men from Latin America migrate to Norway under the grounds of family reunification. I suggest two possible explanations for this phenomenon: On the one hand, it may be the result of rooted macho ideas which prevent Latin American men from moving to a more egalitarian society. On the other hand, it may be the consequence of the relationship between a higher income requirement and the still present gender gap in Norway.

ABSTRACTO

Restrictivas políticas de inmigración son firmadas por los gobiernos en su afán de proteger a sus naciones de la entrada de inmigrantes 'no deseados'. Sin embargo, dichas políticas también pueden afectar a nacionales y sus familias. De hecho, esta tesis muestra como políticas de reunificación familiar transforman el derecho a la familia en privilegio, generando elitismo y limitando la libertad que los noruegos tienen para elegir a una persona no Europea como su pareja. Adicionalmente, dicha situación también puede incrementar el número de inmigrantes ilegales e intensificar la idea del 'pobre – no deseado'.

Esta tesis también muestra que son más las mujeres que los hombres Latinos que migran a Noruega por motivos de reunificación familiar. Por lo tanto sugiero dos posibles explicaciones para este fenómeno: por un lado puede deberse a arraigadas ideas machistas que previenen que los hombres Latinos quieran vivir en una sociedad más igualitaria. Por otro lado, podría deberse a la relación entre el requisito salarial y la brecha de género que aún está presente en la sociedad Noruega.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BREXIT:	British Exit
CMI:	Chr. Michelsens Institute
DEMIG:	Determinants of International Migration
ECHR:	European Convention of Human Rights
EEA:	European Economic Area
EU:	European Union
FPC:	Family Process and Content
FrP:	Norwegian Progress Party
ICT:	Information and Communication Technologies
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IMDi:	Directorate of Integration and Diversity
IMO:	International Immigration Organization
LAT:	Living apart together
NAV:	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
NOK:	Norwegian Krone
NOVA:	Norwegian Institute for Research on Adolescence, Welfare and Aging
OECD:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PM:	Prime Minister
SFO:	After School Childcare
SIB:	Student Welfare Organization in Bergen
SSB:	Statistics Norway
UDHR:	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UDI: Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
UK: United Kingdom
UKIP: UK Independence Party
UN: United Nations
UNICEF: United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
USA: United States of America
VOX: Norwegian Agency for Livelong Learning

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

I have always thought that love does not recognize any race or status, but unfortunately, people and institutions do. My life changed when I took the decision to marry a Latino: I can speak Spanish, have several Latino friends, and learnt to dance salsa and bachata. My husband and I surpassed all the cultural barriers. However, we still need to face the legal fences imposed by the Norwegian national government. My husband's residence permit is soon expiring and I will need to demonstrate not only the realness of our relationship but a minimum income to guarantee his stay in this country. I work as much as I can, but my annual income is still too low to qualify as his sponsor; He also works, however, his income is not taken into account during the application process. This is so unfair! We share all the expenses and his economic cooperation is key for us to have stable finances. The authorities should put the emphasis on love rather than on income. We could be happy living in a 17 square meters room and eating just bread with cheese. But, apparently, love is not that important to them. This situation stresses me, I need to find a new position to secure my husband's or we should apply to another type of residence permit, study perhaps [...] We are also thinking about having a baby, but with this scenario, we decided to wait.

Ida M. (Personal communication, 22th October 2015)

It was a warm and sunny day when I interviewed Ida. An atypical day in Bergen, “*the city of rain*”, as many of my interviewees call it. When I arrived at her residence, Ida and some of her neighbours were in a common yard enjoying the sun. The majority of them were Norwegians and when I, a Latin American woman, passed by, many said *hei* while others quietly observed my trajectory. My ethnicity is obvious because of the clear physical differences I have with Scandinavians. My dark skin, eyes, and hair and

my strong Spanish accent had easily allowed locals to identify me as an immigrant¹. At the beginning, it was difficult for me to interact with the group, as I did not master the topic they were discussing. However, when I mentioned my nationality, the group took a more welcoming attitude towards me. Some tried to speak Spanish; others told me of their trips to Latin America and enumerated the cities they would like to visit; while the rest appeared to be interested in the Latin American weather conditions and the possible difficulties that Latinos face when living in colder areas. That interaction was key to note several thoughts and fears that Norwegians have about Latin America and their inhabitants.

After a while, Ida and I went to her apartment to hold an informal interview. The make-up (or layout) of the room got my attention; it was, perhaps, the representation of two cultures, thoughts and lifestyles. Half of the living room was colourful and decorated with handicrafts and pictures from Latin America; the other half was monochromatic, had her wedding picture and a photo of the couple looking at one of the Norwegian Fjords, several books, and three orchids. Observing my curiosity, Ida promptly told me the story of some the items of the living room, putting emphasis on their origin and their sentimental meaning. The interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and generated some questions that I would try to answer with this thesis:

- How do Latino-Norwegian families understand immigration policies?
- How are Latino-Norwegian families affected by family immigration policies?
- Do current family reunification policies in Norway engender irregular stays in the country?
- Do Norwegians really have the freedom to marry a non-European citizen?
- Are family reunification policies, egalitarian policies?
- How could the current immigration crisis and the Brexit affect family reunification policies in Norway?

¹ "In the dominant Norwegian public sphere, 'immigrant' is used to refer to anyone not perceived as white, regardless of their immigration experience. Those perceived as white and who speak unaccented Norwegian are referred to as 'Norwegian,' while those perceived as white and who have immigrated to Norway are referred to by their country of origin". (Myrdahl 2010:114)

The Importance of Anthropological Studies on Family Reunification Policies

Few anthropological studies focus on family immigration policies (see e.g. Baba, 2013; Shore and Wright 1997; Shore, 2012; Vertovec, 2011; Wedel et al. 2005). However, these policies deal with anthropological themes such as power distribution, gender inequalities, family, identity, social roles, the global and the local (Shore 2012; Shore and Write, 2005; Wedel et al. 2005; Wedel, 1999); codify moral and social values (Baba 2013), contain socio-cultural models and serve as an example of social conduct (Wedel et al. 2005). Hence, one can argue that anthropological studies on this theoretical topic may contribute to establishing fairer policies, improving the integration of migrants and reducing frictions among the different social groups (Shore 2012; Shore and Wright, 1997; Boas, 1940).

Furthermore, in Norway, different studies on family reunification policies have been conducted (see, e.g. Eggebø, 2012b; Hagelund, 2003; Myrdahl, 2010; Staver, 2014). However, none of them explored the effects that family reunification policies may have on Norwegians without immigrant background and their non-European family members. Additionally, Norwegian master students have shown low and almost non-existent interest in exploring migration and international relationships between Norway and Latin America (Bull et al., 2015:251–252). Indeed, Benedicte Bull (2015) indicates that master students interested in Latin America prefer to work with topics related to social inequalities, indigenous and non-indigenous, environment and social responsibility. Thus, by doing an anthropological analysis of family immigration policies I thought I could contribute to understanding Latino-Norwegian families' interpretation of family immigration policies and the effects of those policies on mixed families settled in Norway.

Moreover, as migration rates have been increasing during the last years, the debate on family reunification has become a topic of high interest in the public sphere [International Migration Organisation (IMO), 2014]. The discussion is based on two positions, on the one hand, individuals and institutions seeking to protect the right to have a family (see e.g. Staver, 2014); on the other hand, policy makers trying to protect their countries from economic and cultural losses caused by the presence of outsiders (see e.g. Stolcke, 1995).

In Norway, for instance, a survey conducted by Statistics Norway shows two different positions regarding migration to Norway. On the one side, it indicates that most Norwegians interviewed believe that immigrants can benefit the nation in economic, cultural and social terms (IMO, 2014). Additionally, they agreed that the government should facilitate labour migrants to settle in Norway and families to reunite (ibid). However, the same report shows some conflicting results when the interviewees were either from the elderly age group or receiving social benefits. In those cases, the respondents displayed a negative propensity to accept immigrants in general. They argued that immigrants may take advantage of social benefits giving little in return, generating social chaos, vandalism and interrupting the national harmony. Additionally, the majority of interviewees believed that requirements for refugees and asylum seekers to establish themselves in Norway should be either toughened or maintained at current levels (ibid).

In consequence, in the Norwegian egalitarian society (Eriksen, 2010), the debate on immigration often has a starting point the conceptualisation of an unfair welfare system that provides immigrants with special benefits “*at the expense of Norwegians taxpayers [...] from which Norwegians are excluded*” (Hagelund, 2003:54).

“These special measures should in our opinion be removed. They cost money that alternatively could have been used to help weak groups like the disabled, hard-up elderly and sick people. These special measures carry the main responsibility for some individuals having negative and unfortunate attitudes towards immigrants”.

(MP Carl I. Hagen, Progress Party, Stortinget 01 November 1988, p. 444 in Hagelund, 2003:54)

Concurrently, the Norwegian government fears an increase on the immigration² flows, especially from countries affected by social, economic and political volatility³. Indeed, migrants are, in general, perceived as a threat to the national cohesion and economic stability (Eggebø 2012a; Staver 2008), as some of them and their

² “[A]nthropologists understand immigration as a state of permanence (an immigrant is someone who moves to a host community permanently) whereas a migrant is someone who may move back and forth between his or her home community and one or more host communities” (Suarez-Orozco, p. 55 in Horevitz 2009:748)

³ The refugee crisis increases.

descendants are either profiting from the welfare benefits or getting involved in criminal networks (see *Statistisk Sentral Bureau* [Statistics Norway (SSB)] 2014). Similarly, the Norwegian immigration authorities have detected some cases of forced marriages and marriages of convenience among individuals applying for family reunification (Eggebø, 2012b; González, 2015; *Utlendingsdirektoratet* - Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI, 2010; Hagelund, 2003). These cases are, subsequently, exploited by intense media coverage and policymakers for bolstering tougher regulations on immigration and family reunification (Bonjour and Kraler, 2014; Gudbrandsen, 2012; Hagelund, 2003; Myrdahl, 2010; Staver, 2014).

Notwithstanding the issues above, the family still forms the core of the society. Therefore, international and national regulations seek to protect the fundamental right to establish a family and to its integrity (Bledsoe and Sow, 2008; United Nations (UN), 1948). In consequence, the Norwegian national regulations have been reinforced to tackle the mentioned problems and to protect the 'vulnerable elements' (women and children) of the society from forced marriages and marriages of convenience (Eggebø, 2012b; Eriksen, 2013; Kraler, 2010; Vertovec, 2011). These regulations are part of the country's family reunification policies and put certain limits on the possibilities of any Norwegian citizen to establish a family with a foreign citizen. Thus, the importance to carry anthropological studies on this theoretical topic to bring together different perspectives on family reunification policies and to create fairer policies seeking to reduce the negative effects on the family cohesion and improving immigrants' adaptation processes.

Main Arguments presented

Anthropological studies of family reunification policies analyse immigration laws from the perspective of families, public servants, scholars and public in general. These kinds of studies could contribute to the creation of fairer policies where all women and men may have the same opportunities to reunite with their families. Additionally, by analysing the challenges faced by migrants and their families during the reunification process, anthropologists could identify the factors affecting family cohesion, gender equality, and migrant's integration.

There is widespread international agreement that that each person has the right to have a family⁴. However, in some cases, this right seems to be restricted by tough public policies. In Norway, for instance, individuals wishing to apply for family reunification must demonstrate strong ties with their sponsors as well as fulfil a series of requirements⁵. My findings show that applicants for family reunification, whose sponsors demonstrate to have an income above the average are more likely to have the residence permit approved. Thus, I suggest that Norwegian family immigration policies are exclusionist and put certain limits on the possibilities of any Norwegian citizen to establish a family with a non-European citizen.

Additionally, in the specific case of mixed families consisting of Norwegians and Latinos (from now on mixed families), I argue that restrictive family reunification policies in conjunction with the existing income gap affect family decision-making processes, as well as family structures, and residence patterns. Also, restrictive policies may force mixed families to use a series of mechanisms (sometimes irregular) in order to exercise the right to have a family.

Existing Knowledge

Having as a starting point the idea that what is valid in one place may be inapplicable in another area, I decided to use different approaches to family immigration policies, family and gender to understand the Norwegian and Latin American perceptions on family reunification policies:

Family Immigration Policies

The family is the central unit of society and should be protected by nations⁶. Indeed, having a family is a fundamental right declared as such by the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the EU Convention on Human Rights. However, this universal right

⁴ Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948

⁵ Requirements may vary depending on applicant's nationality. Complete list of requirements is provided by Norwegian Directorate of Immigration- <http://www.udi.no>

⁶ See Annual Tripartite Consultations On Resettlement. Geneva, 20-21 June 2001

may be restricted by tough immigration policies. Anne Staver (2014) and Albert Kraler (2010) argue that restrictions on the right to family reunification have been set to limit the flow of family migrants in countries with a developed welfare state and a rising economy. However, Mikkel Rytter (2010), Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Århus, Denmark, suggests that national requirements to family reunification are established to preserve the homogeneity of the society, and therefore, family reunification policies aim to maintain social cohesion and protect the domestic budget (see also Staver, 2014).

Nevertheless, these restrictions have been placed under the microscope in the previous and current decades due to the increasing number of immigrants flowing across the globe. For instance, the authors above emphasize the interconnection between family reunification policies and the strain exercised on the local economy and social cohesion by a growing number of immigrants to Europe. According to the authors, this phenomenon exists because family migration represents the main reason to enter Norway and the European Union (see also SSB, 2016). Therefore, the financial requirements set by the Norwegian government have represented a way to preserve the society and its welfare state from the loss of values, corruption, exploitation, terrorism, and ghettoization that migration waves may possibly cause (Staver, 2014; Eriksen, 2013; Kraler, 2010). Furthermore, high immigration rates, according to media, receiving societies and policymakers, are threatening the very foundation and values of the European Union, seen as a union of member states sharing similar values and culture, and therefore requires them to control their borders (Reuters, 2016).

Furthermore, by restricting people's movement, immigration policies may be perceived as barriers to prevent the entrance of 'undesired' migrants (see e.g. Anthias 2012; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1995; Vertovec, 2009). Indeed, immigration policies have been categorized as exclusionist, racist and discriminative (see e.g. Staver, 2014; Hagelund, 2013 and Myrdhal, 2010). In Norway, for instance, Anniken Hagelund (2013) indicated that emergent restrictive immigration policies were the response of the shared perspectives of "them" and "us". According to Hagelund, the immigrant was perceived as the "indecent other" who may be the cause of ethnic conflicts and cultural issues. Later, in 2010, Eileen Muller Myrdhal, indicated that tougher immigration policies, portrayed as a tool to combat forced marriages, became a "racial project". According to Myrdhal (2010:106), the Norwegian state perceived

“Third World” countries as oppressive and cruel nations. Hence, policy makers saw the need to strengthen immigration policies in order to prevent the entrance of individuals from precarious areas, reducing in this way the possibilities to ‘pollute’ the nation (ibid). However, this theory was later criticised by Anne Staver (2014), who argued that tough immigration policies could not be seen as a “racial project” anymore. According to her, these policies had to be seen as an economic issue as family migrants were admitted or rejected depending on their sponsor’s income. Consequently, having a family rather than a universal human right had turned to be a privilege, transforming the current family immigration policy into an elitist and exclusionist law.

However, apart from the mentioned studies, little investigation has been done on the effects of family reunification policies on the integration of the aliens into the receiving society and the effects of these policies on mixed families consisting of European (without immigrant background) and non-European citizens. The studies of the authors above are mainly concerned with the economic and legal aspects of this set of policies and their effects on social integration (see also Hagelund, 2013, Eggebø, 2012 and Myrdhal, 2010). In contrast, this study explores the concept of family according to two different realities (the Norwegian and the Latin American) and the political framework affecting family formation as well as social inclusion. I aim to focus on unexplored areas of the Norwegian family reunification policies including the elitism of family reunification policies in selecting the successful cases (Staver, 2014; Kraler, 2010), the unfair treatment and exclusivity of these regulations towards invisible communities, as the case of Latin-American migrants in Norway represents; reunification requirements creating gender discrimination (Kraler, 2010); curtailment of freedom rights, specifically the liberty to choose a partner among non-European citizens; and the creation of barriers towards successful integration into the society of migrant families, with a consequential rise of social tensions in the receiving community (Staver, 2014; Rytter, 2010).

Furthermore, the interviews conducted with academics involved in the theoretical topic, public officers, immigrants, family under the reunification process and the general public boosted my work with practical and theoretical data unavailable through other sources. Thus, by directly contacting all stakeholders involved in the process, I seek to analyse the existing literature regarding socio-economic problems constituted by family migration, the life stories of those affected by the policies. Family reunification policies have contributed to creating gender discrimination, barriers to social

integration and curtailment to universal human rights, potentially leading to spark a powder keg with unforeseeable socio-economic and political consequences on the well-being of the receiving society and its economy.

Family: Process and Content Model

Understanding the Norwegian and the Latin American perception of family is fundamental to understanding the effects that family reunification policies may have on mixed families. There is no universal definition of family as it is shaped by the human ties to economic, political, social and cultural values (Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako 1997). In addition, the roles in a family and its concept have been changing over time. This change can, perhaps, be seen as one of the consequences of globalisation and the new socio-cultural movements and values (Hansen and Slagsvold 2012, Grillo 2008; Scott, 2006; Skogrand et al., 2005). For example, the classical model of family (Grillo, 2008) constituted by father, mother, and children is becoming less common. Indeed, in many societies, the figure of a “passive female” and a “breadwinner husband” is not applicable anymore. For instance, in Norway as well as in many places in Latin America, women, as well as men, have to work and contribute to satisfying the family expenses. Additionally, people are either getting married later or choosing to follow less conventional models of the family (Garrison and Scott, 2012; Howell, 2009; Melhuus, 2009; Grillo, 2008; Cohen et al. 2007). For instance, one can observe a growing number of cohabitants, single parents, same-sex and adoptive families among the most common ones. Also, the growths in mass movements due to tourism, security threats, socio-political and economic issues are allowing people to form mixed families (Holy, 1996). Hence, these factors are leading to an increasing migration of families across the globe to reunify with their beloved members (Goulbourne et al., 2010).

Thus, I base my analysis of family on the Family Process and Content Model (FPC Model). This model blends the family conflict theory and the system theory to describe the family as a *Contextual and Dynamic Phenomena* (Samani 2011). It holds that there are three fundamental elements to analyse a family: The first one denotes the functional organization of the household, including child rearing, parenting, language, decision making and problem solving (ibid). According to Samani (2011:2287), these elements are acquired through *coping* and *adaptation*. For instance, Latinos married

with Norwegians learn to speak the local language and try to imitate local customs, ideas, and traditions to adapt themselves to the new environment.

The second element in the FPC model is the family physical and mental construction. It includes the number of family members, place of residence, race, income, and their presence or absence (Samani, 2011). The main characteristic of this group is that most of the mentioned elements have a *level of changeability* and generate a degree of *dependency* (Samani, 2011:2287). For example, by choosing Norway as a country of residence, Latino family migrants may acquire a different social status and this change may, for instance, create a conflict or give satisfaction.

The last element of the FPC model is the social context. It makes allusion to aspects such as religion, economy, technology and traditions that may have an impact on the family's *modus vivendi*. For instance, Samani (2011: 2288), says that "*Family immigration is an example of family reaction to social condition*". In this case, one (or more) family members feel the necessity to migrate in order to perpetuate the family union. This movement may be either voluntary or forced depending on the social conditions experienced by the immigrant.

Gender Role: Machismo and Marianismo

The Latin American countries are culturally linked to machismo and marianismo practices. The Norwegian society is, on the other hand, perceived as an egalitarian society where women and men have the same rights and obligations. These two notions may influence the opinion that Norwegians have on Latinos and vice versa. It means that while one region may be perceived as oppressive, the other one may be seen as liberal. Gender imaginaries may generate internal conflicts among the studied group and influence the family reunification policies making and interpretation.

The term machismo derives from *macho* (male) and gives men a dominant position vis-à-vis women (Englander; Yáñez and Barney, 2012; Gutmann, 1996). Machismo is commonly associated with Latin cultures and their patriarchal structures (Gutmann, 1996). In places where machismo is culturally accepted and socially reproduced, men are typically presented as breadwinners and therefore responsible for the family economy while women are associated with domestic work and child rearing (see e.g. Grillo, 2008). This role division is reproduced in public and private spheres. For

instance, in macho cultures, most national leaders and head of companies are men, while women are usually employed in middle administrative positions, domestic services, nursery, and schools. In many places, the reproduction of machismo practices is seen with a negative perception. However, to have a clear understanding of this concept, I analyze machismo from two different angles: the positive and the negative. The positive perception of machismo shows responsible fathers ably provide, respect and protect their families (Ramirez, 2008; Peña, 1991). The negative perception, on the other hand, includes the mental and physical abuse of women and children (Gutmann, 1996), alcohol consumption, extra-marital relationships and use of inappropriate language (Gutmann, 1996; Peña, 1991).

Furthermore, while studying the reproduction of macho stereotypes one should also study the reproduction of marianismo practices. The term marianismo comes from the Virgin Mary (Englander; Yáñez and Barney 2012). It makes reference to an “ideal” woman who is feminine, maternal, self-negating, a martyr to her children and spiritually superior (ibid). According to Stevens “In the family, marianismo requires making the male ego the center of attention, and mothers and sisters cater and defer to him” (Stevens 1972/1998 in Englander; Yáñez and Barney 2012:69). Further, marianismo can be perceived as a strategic whereby women benefit from the ideal of women as morally and spiritually superior than men because of their capacity to produce life, protect their family and tolerate their husbands (Stevens, 1973). However, “[m]arianismo as a cultural archetype offers no role for women’s leadership”. (Englander et al., 2012:79). The ideal women could not have any macho behavior, she must be pure, decent, and abnegated (Englander; Yáñez and Barney, 2012). Conducts such as “promiscuity”, “gossiping” and “lack of shame” are therefore seen as inappropriate behaviors, restricting female free will, power, and voice (Melhuus, 1996).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned approaches to machismo and marianismo, Melhuus’ and Gutmann’s studies in Mexico (1992, 1993 and 1996 respectively) demonstrate that femininity and masculinity are ambiguous (see also Stølen, 2002:170). According to the anthropologists, women as well as men in Latin America behave differently according to the circumstances and people surrounding them. They can be either strong or vulnerable, leaders or subordinates. Therefore, the reproduction of Latino gender images depends on the social context in which the individual is situated.

Bergen, Norway: The Fieldwork Location



Imagery ©2016 Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO, IBCAO, Landsat, U.S. Geological Survey, Map data ©2016 Google 200 km

Source: Google Maps (2016). Available at:

<https://www.google.no/maps/@60.3429827,5.3589239,2636285m/data=!3m1!1e3>

This research project on family reunification policies was conducted between July 2015 and January 2016 among mixed families settled in Bergen, Norway. This city founded by King Olav Kyrre in the XI century and declared as a World Heritage city by UNESCO, has a strategic location attracting hundreds of tourists who are captivated by its history, culture and the beauty of its nature.⁷ The city also attracts a considerable number of immigrants who arrive in the city looking for new opportunities to work, study or establish a family. In order to locate Latinos married to Norwegians I carried an online search to identify some of the venues where they normally gather. Therefore, I had joined conferences, social meetings, dance lessons and several cultural events celebrated in Bergen.

In the following lines I will briefly introduce the reader to Norway and its population. Located in Northern Europe and with 5,213,985 inhabitants as of 1st January 2016 (SSB, 2016), Norway has one of the most stable economies in the world (Bevelander et al., 2013; Eriksen, 2013). The Norwegian economy is based on service industries and petroleum production and exploration (Regjeringen, 2013). These aspects, in conjunction with magnificent landscapes, high educational levels, and effective social

⁷ See <http://en.visitbergen.com/>

policies, make the Scandinavian country an attractive place for foreigners and locals who feel safe and protected by an egalitarian public policy (Eriksen, 1993). Annually, thousands of aliens – 49,900 persons with non-Nordic citizenship (SSB 2016) – arrive in Norway for different reasons: education, work, asylum, tourism and family reunification (UDI, 2006). At the beginning of 2015, immigrants constituted the 13% of the total population in Norway, with Polish, Swedish and Lithuanians leading the list (SSB, 2016). Also, projections from Statistics Norway show that approximately 25% of the Norwegian population in 2030 will consist of immigrants (ibid). This tendency influences the creation of protectionist policies where the government seeks to defend the national interest from corruption, loss of identity, insecurity, and terrorism (Vertovec, 2011). But, how do these policies affect the creation of families and the freedom of Norwegians to choose non-EU partners? To answer this question, I opted to work with Latino-Norwegian families in Bergen, exploring the concepts of family, place, gender, nationality, space, identity and marriage.

Norway is known as a homogenous country, with equitable education and healthcare systems which help to promote gender equality and social integration (Eriksen, 2010). Additionally, Norwegians are often perceived as consensus-oriented, honest, private and introverted people who like to keep intact the national traditions, values, and principles (Eriksen, 2001). Norway also shows a growth in the number of people living alone, multiple births, adoption, children born outside the matrimony, international marriages, same-sex partnerships and cohabitation (SSB, 2010). At the same time, unemployment rates are still low compared with other European countries. Nonetheless, many women still work part time and have lower income compare to men (ibid).

Additionally, in terms of immigration rates, the total of immigrants in 2014 showed a reduction compared with 2012, being labour seeking and family reunification being the main immigration causes (SSB, 2015). The majority of immigrants who applied for family reunification in 2014, came to establish a family with a Norwegian with non-immigrant background (ibid). Furthermore, only 544 of 16,212 cases of family reunification corresponded to Latin American married with Norwegians (ibid). Additionally, in 2015 the number of people who appeared to feel uncomfortable with mixed marriages (Norwegian- Latin American), dropped from 23% in 2002 to 17% in 2015 (Blom, 2015). Indeed, Svein Blom (2015) indicates that a significant majority of

Norwegians believe that most immigrants enrich the national cultural life and play an important role in the national economy. Which in turn improves the interaction between locals and foreigners (ibid). In Bergen, for example, Latinos are generally well accepted. For instance, discussions, debates, and presentations about Latin America are held all year long, many learn Spanish or Latin dances, others choose Latin America as a holiday destination.

Research Methods and Methodology

This research has used primary and secondary data collection followed by the corresponding qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results. Primary data has been obtained through participant observation and interviews conducted with a random sampling of mixed families. To have a broader perspective of the studied topic, I have also interviewed academics, public servants and general public. The secondary data collected consists of statistics collected from SSB, documents and articles recommended by the UDI and the *Norsk Arbeids- og Velferdsforvaltningen* [Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)], and articles found in the government's (*Regjeringen*) website.

Participant Observation

In general terms, participant observation was a rewarding experience, challenging but providing a wealth of information. Establishing a network was fundamental to collecting data. I visited different venues including, open kindergartens, health centres, night clubs, meeting rooms, public entities, libraries and a series of touristic places. My experience also included short stays and visits to my informants' homes, as well as participation in seminars, debates, discussions and conferences about Latin American society, culture and economy were also an important resource for this research. I also participated in diverse events organized by Chr. Michelsens Institute - CMI, *Det Akademiske Kvarter*, International Migration and Ethnic Relations Research Unit Bergen (IMER) and two organized groups of Latin Americans in Bergen.

To place myself in the field, I started visiting the mentioned venues to establish a first contact with Latin Americans who may have gone through the family reunification process. I introduced myself and the research project to gain self-confidence as well as the trust of interviewees, catching people's attention and building a network. Individuals interested in my project, besides being informants, became key to expand my network by introducing me to other mixed family members. Also, I was invited to different discussions on migration to Norway, where I had the opportunity to meet immigrants, scholars, and public figures who provided me with information regarding immigration policies and suggested to me useful literature to increase my knowledge on this theoretical topic and to properly analyse the data collected. Furthermore, I also had the possibility to participate in diverse social events (from religious ceremonies to parties), allowing me to observe the interaction between Norwegians and Latin Americans. Additionally, as I began the fieldwork during my fifth month of pregnancy, I used my physical condition as a strategy to establish contact with other parents (Latinos and Norwegians) who could share their perceptions on family and family reunification policies.

The participants were open, kind and willing to cooperate. By allowing me to carry out several domestic visits, I had the opportunity to observe the family life, structure, habits and traditions. I also paid attention to space distribution and gender roles to understand how socio-cultural patterns may influence the family thoughts and behaviours.

Most of the informants have been married for at least three years, others are just beginning the process, and the rest are currently divorced. Therefore, each narrative was crucial to capture different perceptions on immigration, policies and family. Narratives included the motives to establish a family in Norway instead of Latin America, the reunification process, the difficulties to create a social network or finding a job in Norway, challenges and opportunities and the benefits provided by the Norwegian state to foreign citizens married with Norwegians. Additionally, as important as listening to life stories was observing the environment surrounding mixed families as well as the interaction between family members and the rest of the community.

Interviews and Conversations

As previously mentioned, interviews were crucial to understanding the different perspectives on family immigration policies and their effects on mixed families settled in Norway. Firstly, I contacted some leaders from the different Latin American groups existing in Bergen to explain my project and obtain their help in contacting individuals involved in the family reunification process. Afterwards, I visited numerous venues including public institutions libraries, kindergartens and research centres where I was introduced to multicultural families as well as public servants and scholars who enriched my investigation with their knowledge. However, the interviewing process was very demanding in terms of time and physical and mental organization. As an important part of the fieldwork was handled during the summer season, some of the interviews were delayed a couple of times, modifying the initial schedule and requiring me to maintain a strict focus on timings and logistic organization to reach all of my objectives within the established timeframe.

During the interviews I encouraged the informants to freely express themselves. I also informed them about the principle of confidentiality followed in this research where their identities were going to be anonymised and information would be stored in a safe place.

Hereafter, I will explain how the interviews have been divided:

a. Married couples: 9 in total, where five corresponded to Latinas married to Norwegian men and four were Norwegian women married to Latinos. For each of these couples, I had interviewed both partners to obtain the two perspectives about the discussed points. I also had the opportunity to make some follow-up interviews to three of the couples handling them as informal conversations.

b. Divorced people who had previously gone through the reunification process: 6 persons in total. Four men from Latin American, one Norwegian woman and one Latin woman.

c. One couple who is applying for family reunification: a Norwegian woman and her Latin American partner.

d. One living apart together (LAT) family (Rohlfing, 1995), a married couple whose partners live in different countries.

e. Five individuals who have been through the family reunification process.

I have also randomly questioned 100 Norwegians without immigrant background, across Norway, on their perception of Latin-Americans and their degree of social acceptance of Latino immigrants. This question aided my study with a cross-generational insight over Norwegians' attitude towards immigrants with Latino's roots. Additionally, some of them were also asked about their perception on family reunification and migration crisis.

Furthermore, I also had the opportunity to interview scholars from the Universities of Bergen, Oslo, Tromsø, Toronto and *Autónoma de Colombia*, who are or were working with topics related to migration, Latin American Studies, international relations and cultural mediation. Their participation was crucial to have a better understanding of family reunification policies and their effects on mixed families settled in Norway.

Texts

In addition to the research methods previously described, I also contacted some public bodies including the *Skatteetaten* (Tax Office), NAV (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) and UDI (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration) to obtain more information regarding the analysed topic. They provided me with different links to regulations, reports, statistics and academic work on family-related issues. The combination of these texts with the primary data gave me a clearer overview of the family reunification process in Norway.

Data Analysis

My background in Economic foreign affairs in addition to the anthropological knowledge acquired at the University of Bergen enabled me to do a critical analysis of both primary and secondary data. The data collected was divided into four main groups: social family imaginaries, regulations on family immigration, challenges faced by mixed families and the effects of immigration policies on the creation of families.

Fieldwork Challenges and Issues

Doing the fieldwork during the pregnancy and subsequent maternity period represented the biggest challenge. In different moments I had to set aside pain and physical indisposition to fulfil the established commitments. I also relied on my husband to accomplish my goal. He helped me to get to the different venues when my health condition required it. Moreover, when my daughter was born, the presence of my mother allowed me to successfully complete the research.

In addition to this, other issues were faced during the fieldwork. The data collection process was affected by the summer break. During this period, some of my informants went out of the country, while others found a second job; some institutions closed and others re-adjusted their schedules and/or worked with a reduced staff; public transportation was also affected, having modifications in timetables and connections. The union of these factors provoked delays in the data collection as some appointments had to be moved to September. It, therefore, demanded a higher focus on timings and extra logistic organization.

Language became another challenge during the research period. My mother tongue is Spanish, however, as each country has its own dialects, I needed to learn several new words and their meanings to have fluent, clear and coherent conversations with my Latino informants⁸. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that Norwegians are good at communicating in English, the interviews may have offered a better insight of the Norwegian cultural values if conducted in their native language. Additionally, because of my limited language knowledge, I also had to skip academic texts written in Norwegian as well as seminars and conferences on migration and Latin America held in the same language.

Finally, the relatively small amount of anthropological literature on family reunification policies became a big challenge to write this thesis. Thus, I combine socio-political approaches to family immigration with anthropological studies on family, kinship, identity, nationalism, gender, dependency and migration to properly analyse the effects of family reunification policies on mixed families.

⁸ E.g. *Guaga*: child/bus; *Buso*: sweater/sport pants; Child: *pibe/chivolo/chino/chico/chavo/chamaco/guagua*

Motivation

This project is a reflection of my desire to understand the effects of globalization on ethnic minorities, and forgotten communities. The current immigration crisis has polarized the perception of immigrants and policies and therefore is preventing the movement of people from less favoured places to more stable countries. But as little has been discussed on how could the immigration crisis and restrictive immigration policies affect mixed families consisting of Norwegians without immigrant background and foreign citizens, I decided to investigate this matter to provide an anthropological approach to this theoretical matter and possibly opening a discussion on this issue.

By focusing on Latino-Norwegian families I am placing myself outside of the controversies of forced marriages and refugees bringing their families that the restrictions on family reunification are designed to hinder and limit, respectively. Since this study investigates the consequences of these regulations for Norwegians of non-immigrant background and Latin Americans, this is an important contribution to our knowledge about how these policies, intended to hinder a phenomenon of quite limited expansion, affect a large number of Norwegians and their families.

Ethical Considerations

To guarantee the neutrality in this project, I had set aside any bias or prejudice regarding Norway, Latin-America, policy makers and migration. Thus, I had interviewed different actors involved in the family reunification process in Norway including applicants and their sponsors, public servants, scholars and public in general. It therefore allowed me to have a comprehensive perspective on the chosen topic and helped me to write an impartial dissertation.

Additionally, as the number of Latin American citizens living in Bergen is small, I have anonymised the informants' identity to guarantee their privacy. Also, being coherent with the regulatory framework stated by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service- NSD, I had destroyed any evidence that could reveal their identity and stored the collected data in a password protected computer handled exclusively by myself.

Thesis Outline

In order to explore the effects of Norwegian family reunification policies on mixed families, I have divided my thesis into 5 main chapters:

Chapter 1: It introduces the reader to mixed families and family reunification policies in Norway. It also shows the reasons to carry an anthropological study on this topical issue and describes theories and methods used to collect and analyse data.

Chapter 2: It explores the concept of family from the Norwegian and Latin American perspectives, allowing the reader to understand the socio-cultural similarities and differences that may influence on the understanding of family reunification policies.

Chapter 3: It offers an anthropological approach to immigration policies and introduces the reader to the Norwegian family immigration law, income requirement, marriages of convenience and the public debate on family migration.

Chapter 4: It discusses the challenges faced by mixed families before, during and after the reunification process. It focuses on decision and place-making processes and analyses marriages of convenience and income requirement.

Chapter 5: It opens a debate on how tough family immigration policies hinder the family cohesion, generate elitism, delay migrant's integration and restrict Norwegians' decision making.

CHAPTER 2. NORWEGIAN AND LATIN AMERICAN KINSHIP COMPARED

New patterns and structures of family formation and relationships give rise to new gender issues and the need for new policies. In Norway, many people live in single households; some couples cohabit for a while, others never marry. The divorce rate among those who marry is high. Marriages, where one or both partners are of foreign origin, have become more and more common in Norway. Same-sex couples have had the right to registered cohabitation since 1993. Since 2009 same-sex couples have had the right to enter into marriage on the same basis as heterosexuals⁹.

Family reunification is the largest source of legal immigration to Europe (See e.g. Staver, 2014; Eggebø, 2012). The rights to family reunification have been legally framed by the regulations of the 'Western' nuclear families (King and Lulle, 2016:34). However, the concept of family is constantly "reconstituted, adapted and negotiated according to changing circumstances and opportunities across space and through time" (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002 in King and Lulle, 2016:34). Hence, a different observation of family needs to be done to understand the current debate on family reunification and the effects that immigration policies have on mixed families.

In consequence, to offer a coherent analysis of family reunification policies in Norway and their effects on mixed families consisting of Norwegians and Latin Americans, this chapter explores the Norwegian, and Latin American view of family, family life and the different types of family found in those two areas.

⁹ Gender in Norway 2014. Available at: <http://www.gender.no/Topics/13>

Anthropological Approaches to Family

In the nineteenth century, the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, in his book *The Family Among the Australian Aborigines*, defined family as a 'universal institution', where family members have emotional ties and share a common place (Collier; Rosaldo and Yanagisako, 1997:72). He argued that these conditions allowed children and parents to recognize one another, while outsiders could clearly identify which adults were responsible for rearing which children (*ibid*). However, this definition has been challenged by anthropologists such as Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako who argued that Malinowski's definition of family was erroneous. According to them, Malinowski failed to analyse the human ties to 'cultural' and 'moral' values. Thus, the family could not be considered a universal entity that satisfies specific needs, neither it could have a universal definition; it would rather be an "ideological construct with moral implications" (Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako 1997:79). In consequence, the concept of family is shaped by cultural diversification, technological advances and a new socio-economic order (Howell, 2009; Melhuus, 2009; Grillo, 2008; Cohen et al. 2007).

In Norway, the family is labelled as:

"that group of people who live in the same residence and are connected among one another as spouses, cohabitants, registered partners, and/or parents and unmarried children, regardless of the children's age"¹⁰.

Moreover, Hauge et al. (1999) highlight that a family may include "only one cohabitation, married couple or partnership and at most two contiguous generations" (*ibid*).

The other face of the coin is represented by the Latin countries (as well as by African nations and the Muslim world) (Carlos and Sellers, 1972). In this case, the term includes not only the nuclear family as in Norway but also the extended and fictive families as part of one core (Skogrand et al., 2005), denominations which will be explored at a later stage in this thesis.

The conjunction of these facts leads to the creation of new models of family, including mixed race families, same-sex families, cohabitation, foster homes and

¹⁰ see Hauge et al. 1999:6

adoptive families, among others (Melhuus, 2009). For instance, in the apartment building where I live in Bergen, there are five traditional families (Norwegian men, married with Norwegian women), one same-sex parent family, two single mothers' families, one single father family, and two mixed families. This illustration is a good sketch of the diversification found in Western countries. Undoubtedly, these new kinship systems are gaining social acceptance, although, sometimes they are criticized and condemned. According to Grillo (2008), in the public sphere, some of the new models of the family are often represented as problematic. In Europe and North America, for instance, since the nineteenth century, many discourses have pointed to the psychological vulnerability of children reared in non-traditional families (Howell, 2009). In this logic, conservatives are taking for granted that traditional families provide children and communities with the required social and moral values to build an identity and create a sense of belonging (Fedorak, 2013; Howell, 2009). Notwithstanding, the position above, the image of the 'ideal' family is constantly changing, which implicates a change in the role of the state in determining the conditions for marriage, reproduction, and partnership (Grillo, 2008).

Most common types of family in Western Societies

In order to prepare the ground for the analysis in later chapters, I will compare some of the existing family models in Norway and Latin America. In doing so, I will explore traditional families, extended families, cohabitation, single parents and same-sex relationships. This discussion will involve cultural, religious and legal issues, as controversies and challenges around this topic have been evolving at a different pace according to the studied society (Pasternak et al., 1997).

Traditional Families

Traditional families consist of father, mother, and children. In this case, the paternal role is to provide economic support for the whole family (Gamburd, 2000). Men are therefore seen as the 'daily bread' winner (Sgró Ruata, 2011). For instance, some of the Latin American men (Latinos) interviewed say that domestic tasks (including

childcare) must be delegated to women. '*Las mujeres estan hechas para esto*' (women are made for this) they said. This argument, however, does not consider the complete set of female capabilities. It takes for granted that women cannot go out to work or play male traditional roles. It also forgets that many, if not the majority of the traditional families are not 'traditional' anymore, speaking of the strict meaning of the word traditional (Satz, 2007).

Nowadays many women have stable jobs and contribute to the economic support of their families (Arriagada 2001). For instance, SSB indicates that Norwegian females in 2010 constituted the majority in institutions of higher education and had a representation of 47 percent in the labour force (SSB, 2010). However, the amount of domestic tasks carried out by women remains stable. Every day, before going out to work, many women (Latinas and Norwegians) wake up earlier to pack the lunch and lay out clothes for the whole family (Gutmann, 1996; Hansen; Slagsvold, 2012). Additionally, when their workday has finished, women go back home to prepare dinner, pick up their children from school, and accompany them to any extracurricular activities (Hansen, Thomas; Slagsvold 2012); they also set things in order, look after the garden, clean the windows or organize social activities; renovate their houses, repair damages and move heavy stuff on their own. This situation, thus, illustrates Gutmann's (1996) and Melhuus' (1999) idea that individuals act according to the environment around them. Therefore, portraying women as fragile and vulnerable could be a mistake, as they also show themselves to be strong, vigorous and economic, as well as mentally and physically independent (Hansen and Slagsvold, 2012; Stølen, 2002). Also, by managing domestic duties and keeping an active role, women could assure the family unity (Gutmann, 1996).

Extended Families

The concept of extended family (*parentesco*) is applied to the social kinship network created by the nuclear family and less immediate relatives (Wagner, 2003). It normally involves the nuclear family, grandparents, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins (Skogrand et al., 2005). This type of family supposes cooperation, support, and proximity (Wagner, 2003) and is commonly found in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Carlos and Sellers, 1972). Family members normally share domestic labour,

economic and physical support, childcare and elderly care (Sarkisian, Gerena, and Gerstel, 2007).

In Latin America, relatives can either build their houses nearby or share the same household and it is also normal to observe adults living together with their parents. Likewise, married people can also bring their spouse and children to live at his/her parents' residential unit. In this case, the couple guarantees elders' well-being, while elders help to rear the children and share household chores. This 'generalized reciprocity'¹¹ in which assistance is provided to another member of the family, is seen perhaps as a vehicle to reinforce the familial ties. Reciprocity is expected and important to keep the family together. Family is a source of belonging and identity (Zavella and Takash, 1993), therefore, the behaviour of each individual seeks to satisfy the general expectations of the family (ibid). Thus, extended families could become either a source of moral and economic support or a barrier to achieving personal or collective objectives (Lippman and Bradford Wilcox, 2013).

Moreover, in the case of mixed families, technology plays an important role in preventing the familial ties to be broken. For instance, Latinos married to Norwegians constantly use technological devices to communicate with their relatives in their home countries. This communication enables mixed families to obtain a series of benefits, including bilingualism, moral support and the opportunity to preserve both cultural traditions. However, keeping strong familial ties with relatives living abroad can delay the immigrant's adaptation process (Grillo, 2008). Indeed, one can argue that when immigrants are still immersed in their traditions, they do not try to incorporate themselves into the new environment. Moreover, cultural differences could create mental barriers that prevent the full integration to the new society (Eriksen, 2013).

For instance, Vicky a Peruvian lady who lived with her parents and siblings until the age of twenty-four indicated that: In South America girls normally have to help their mothers with the domestic tasks. Also, as many families are constituted by a large number of individuals, women need to spend at least three hours in the kitchen to prepare fresh meals for their relatives. Vicky also indicates that when dinner is ready, women proceed to serve the head of the family (the father), followed by the rest of men and leaving women in the last place. When dinner is over, men continued with their

¹¹ See Sahlins, 1972

duties while women organized the kitchen. Nowadays, Vicky is married to a Norwegian and has lived in Bergen for almost 25 years. However, she preserves the Peruvian familial tradition intact, refuses eating Norwegian food at her place and once a month sends a certain sum of money to her youngest sister in Peru. To her, this habit is entirely normal and helps to maintain a close relation with her family. Her husband and sons, on the other hand, believe that this behaviour prevents Vicky from exploring the Norwegian culture and makes her sister economically dependent.

This story, then, allowed us to understand the cultural and mental fences previously exposed by Grillo (2008) and Eriksen (2013). Also, it illustrates that Westerners (including Norwegians), can clash with the modus vivendi of extended families as it may create psychological and economic dependency (Oltedal and Nygren, 2015; Øye, 2006). This is a situation that clearly contrasts with the Norwegian idealisation of a self-determining, autonomous and independent character.

Another conflicting situation arises in the treatment of the elderly. In Norway, the elderly are taken to nursing homes to offer them a dignified life during the last stage of their lives. This action is culturally accepted and it allows the elderly to continue with their lives while allowing the rest of the family to keep up with commitments such as remunerated work and childrearing. In Latin America, on the other hand, taking the elderly to nursing homes is commonly perceived as a negative action, and instead, they spend their last years with relatives or close friends. This situation was broadly outlined by Maria, a Latina in her fifties, who took care of her aunt until her last day of life. Maria (as other Latino informants) says that:

“Love and attention create a moral obligation: If someone raises an individual and cares for him/her, then he/she has the moral obligation to give love and care back, creating a reciprocal exchange repeated generation after generation”.

She also pointed out that Latinos do not have an obligation to move out of their parents' house when they become adults, get married or reach an economic stability. The only obligation is, according to her, to ensure the welfare of the family regardless of one's location. This situation also contrasts with the one observed in Norway, where people tend to get independent at a young age (especially when their parents' residence is located in rural areas) (SSB 2010).

Cohabitation, Single-Parent and Same-Sex Families

The idea of family and household structure are being currently diversified (Grillo 2008; Arriagada, 2001). New models including cohabitation, single parents and same-sex marriages are gaining considerable space. However, addressing this topic is not an easy task due to the religious, cultural and legal issues involved (Fedorak, 2013). For instance, these family forms are more visible and accepted in Northern Europe than Southern Europe. According to the SSB (2010) births outside marriage in Norway shifted from 3 per cent in 1950's to 56 percent in 2008, while the number is still very low in Southern Europe. In Latin America, on the other hand, births outside the marriage, single parenting, and adolescent pregnancy are often associated with lower social classes and poverty (ECLAC, UNICEF, and UNICEF TACRO 2007). Therefore, many people are still entering into matrimony (especially in higher social strata) to prevent criticisms and loss of prestige¹². Additionally, the abortion prohibition and social inequality increase the number of single mothers and unlawful practices in Latin America. It contrasts with the situation in Norway where women can, during the first 12 weeks of gestation¹³, decide whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy (SSB 2010). Moreover, the Norwegian welfare system provides economic support to single mothers/fathers who have a sole care of a child¹⁴. This allows the single-parent community to comply with the required economic means to provide stability to the family.

Also, a similar discourse is held around same-sex parent families. In some places like Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, and France same-sex marriage has been legalized (Andersson et al. 2004). With this legalization, couples enjoy the same benefits than traditional families, including childcare, inheritance, and taxation (Fedorak, 2013). In Norway, from 1993 to 2008, a total of 2,700 same-sex marriages were registered, where male partnerships represented the majority, while a considerable segment involved a non-Norwegian citizen (SSB, 2010; Andersson et al. 2004). Hence, lesbians and gays are more open about their sexual inclinations and

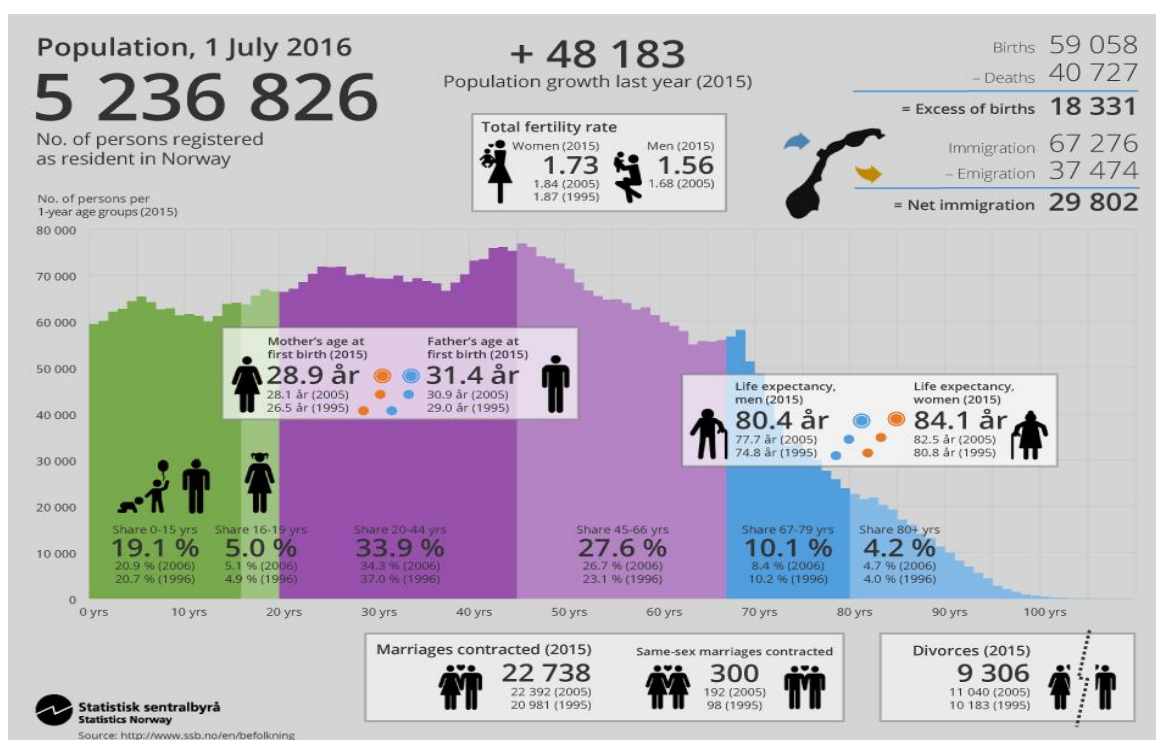
¹² It is also a consequence of the influence exerted by the Catholic Church on Christians (Pedersen, 2014).

¹³ Around 15,200 abortions were conducted in Norway during 2007 (SSB 2010).

¹⁴ Requirements to get benefits as a single mother/father available at:
<https://www.nav.no/en/Home/Benefits+and+services/Relatert+informasjon/benefit-for-single-mother-father>

same-sex marriages are gaining space in Europe, especially in Norway and Northern Europe (Garrison and Scott 2012). However, in Latin America and other places with a strong religious tradition, homosexuality remain taboo (Fedorak, 2013). Therefore, notwithstanding their real sexual inclination some men boast of being a ‘macho’ and having a selfless wife (Gutmann, 1996), and some women repress their sexual desires to avoid being branded as immoral (Melhuus, 1999). Indeed, it is not unusual that same-sex partners had previously had a heterosexual relationship and in consequence, some of them might be parents (Andersson et al., 2004). However, they chose to hide their real sexual inclinations and lead a ‘double life’ to protect their names and status.

Understanding Family Life in Norway and Latin America



Source: <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/nokkeltall/population>

There is not such a thing as a universal definition of family. Instead, the family is shaped by the human ties to economic, political, social and cultural values (Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako, 1997). Hence, as what is socially accepted in one place,

might be highly contested elsewhere, each “imagined community”¹⁵ has its own notion of family and family relationship. For instance, while in Norway familial ties are stronger among the members of nuclear families (father, mother and children); in Latin America, these ties are extended to grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and close friends, creating a family interdependency known as *‘familismo’* (Chang and Liou, 2009).

Likewise, in Norway, as in most Western societies, one can find different models of family including traditional families (which participation is being reduced), single-parent families, cohabitants, same-sex partner, adoptive, foster and mixed families (SSB, 2010). Additionally, individuals are either living alone or delaying marriage age, generating a new perception of family (Martin 2002; Eriksen, 2001). Indeed, SSB (2010) indicates that the average age at marriage increased to 34 for women and 38 for men; 18% of the Norwegians lived alone in 2009 and fertility rate for the same year was extended to 2 births per woman (being among the highest in Europe) (SSB, 2010). The explanation for these numbers has their foundations on the application of national gender equality policies that allow the female inclusion to the labour market and the education system, giving women the opportunity to combine personal and professional life (SSB, 2010; Eriksen, 2001).

Latin American society, on the other hand, has been traditionally linked to a patriarchal family model (Arriagada, 2001; Covre-sussai et al., 2015). However, the female incorporation to the labour market, globalization, migrations and demographic changes have influenced the creation and acceptance of new family models (ibid). Indeed, Latin America displays a growth in the number of cohabitants and single-parent families (Covre-sussai et al., 2015). Also, same-sex marriages have been legalized in some countries, including Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Uruguay (Lipka, 2015). Even so, this tendency still finds a radical opposition in the rest of the Latin American countries, especially in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, where nuclear-patriarchal families are the most accepted model of family (ibid). Furthermore, different from the “close” and “impenetrable” Norwegian family lifestyle (Holter, 1993:149), Latinos prefer to establish and maintain family ties with a larger number of individuals including not only relatives but close friends (Chang and Liou

¹⁵ See Anderson 1983

2009). These ties allow them to share economic and emotional responsibilities around children and the elderly while distributing the household chores and maintenance among a wider number of persons (ibid).

Moreover, the social imaginary of the family in Norway shows also a stark contrast to the Latin American one: Whereas Norway is perceived as an egalitarian and child-friendly country (Eriksen, 2013), Latin America is seen as a region with socio-economic issues including social inequality, higher rates of unemployment, violence and health issues (Flores Mora, 2015). The Norwegian government has created policies to guarantee children wellbeing, including parental benefits related to birth and adoption, childcare benefits and the extension of parental leave¹⁶. Additionally, childcare is equally shared between parents and the parental benefit period is divided into ten weeks maternal quota, ten weeks paternal quota and a shared period of 26 or 36 weeks depending on the degree of coverage, 100% or 80% respectively (ibid).

According to the UNICEF (2011) in Latin America, on the other hand, childcare regulations suffer a serious deficit; maternity leave oscillates between 84 days (12 weeks) and 120 days (approximately 17 weeks). Additionally paternity leave goes from 2 days to 28 days, and breastfeeding breaks fluctuate between 30 minutes and 2 hours per day (UNICEF, 2011). Upon completion of the maternity leave and the return to work, Latino parents' abilities to rear a child are even more challenged. According to my informants, during the working days, many Latinos are away from home at least 10 hours a day, so that parents cannot expend substantial time with their children and need to rely on grandparents, relatives or close friends to fulfil this task. This situation, thus, illustrates well Chang and Liou's (2009) theory about the importance of extended and fictive families in the conservation of familial ties in Latin America.

Furthermore, according to my informants, the education system is very different in the two regions. The school days in Norway are short, starting from 4 hours a day and increasing steadily; children are stimulated to read analytically and to participate in the different discussions. *"Their voices are heard and appreciated, stimulating the construction of self-confidence, analytical skills and respect for others' opinions"*, one of the interviewees said. Additionally, the concept of homework is a 'soft' one, children

¹⁶ Men and women commonly take some weeks off from work during the child's first year of life to exercise their right to parental leave (NAV, 2016).

do not need to dedicate many hours to make their homework, they are rather encouraged to enjoy the childhood by playing in and outdoors, reading stories, visiting friends and spending time with their parents.

In Latin America, on the other hand, education appears to be stricter. Catalina, a Peruvian citizen affirm that children have a strict academic schedule:

From the age of five, children must spend around six hours at school, during the first two years of schooling, they learn to read, write and count, by the age of 7, Latin children should also have math basic knowledge (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) and the ability to learn other subjects such as history, biology, Spanish, physical education, geography among others.

Catalina B. (Personal conversation, November 12th 2015)

Similarly, children have the obligation to complete a vast amount of homework that, according to some of the parents I have spoken to, *restrict children's freedom to develop other extracurricular activities*. Latino families are also highly hierarchical and teach children to follow adults' instructions, to listen to them and respect them (Brown et al., 1996). Then it is common to hear expressions such as "*when adults speak, children are quiet*". In this logic, when a child takes part in his parents' conversations without permission, parents risk being judged for providing a poor education to their children. This principle is also applied at school, where children rarely question professors' thoughts, techniques or pedagogy.

In addition, in Latin America, there is also a deficiency in foreign language tuition. The majority of schools impart English lessons, however, the number of bilingual students is still very low (De Wit et al., 2005). Norwegian students, in contrast, are bilingual or trilingual. At school, children have the chance to master at least two foreign languages with English being compulsory and German, Spanish and Italian among the most popular second choices. Furthermore, in Norway children also join the *Skole Fritids Ordning* – SFO (after school childcare), where they have the possibility to spend some extra time discovering their talents by dancing, singing, playing instruments or making handicrafts. Additionally, after school and SFO many children are involved in extracurricular activities, e.g.: scouts, football, and karate, marching bands and dancing. These activities enable children to strengthen their ability to interact with

peers while developing physical and/or intellectual skills. However, notwithstanding the benefits for the children, bringing them to extracurricular activities and actively volunteering for organizations to raise funds or celebrating special occasions can increase the strain on parents who are already stressed from their daily duties¹⁷. Finally, when children are at home, they relax playing computer games, using their mobile phones or other electronic devices, watching TV or reading.

Another important aspect of Norwegian family life is the creation of a close relationship with nature and the participation in diverse outdoor activities (Holter, 1993). Indeed, Norwegians commonly say that “*there is not bad weather only bad clothing*”. Thus, despite the adverse weather conditions, parents and children enjoy walking, scouting, jogging, hiking, fishing or practicing winter sports. In addition, the majority of Norwegian families have a *hytte* (cabin) in the mountains or along their hundreds of water bodies (lakes, fjords, rivers and the sea). The cabin is the place where family members have the possibility to spend weekends and holidays in an intimate environment while reinforcing the familial ties and enjoying the proximity to nature. During the stay in the *hytte*, Norwegians do not spend a lot of time preparing meals. On the contrary, they choose to prepare quick and easy meals like a taco, pasta or pizza. This decision gives them the opportunity to expend more time outdoors collecting firewood, walking, sunbathing or skiing. I also observed that being invited to a family hut can be seen as a strong symbol of friendship. As previously stated, the days are spent outdoors, and the nights become a more intimate moment when hosts and guests have the opportunity to get to know each other better while exchanging life stories, listening to soft and relaxing music and drinking a glass of wine. Prior leaving the cabin, visitors write their memories in a *hyttebok* as a symbol of gratitude. This cabin culture is highly significant for the construction of the Norwegian identity, taking new generations closer to their ancient traditions. Furthermore, during the holidays Norwegians may also choose to travel abroad choosing destinations in Southern Europe, Asia or Latin America. Selecting these spots is not a coincidence when travelling abroad, Norwegians (especially those with children) prefer to visit

¹⁷ Some of the most popular activities, in which both parents and children might be contemporarily involved, are: *musikkorps*, *loppemarked*, charity and fundraising brigades in shopping centres and door to door sales of lotteries, biscuits or cakes

recommended places where they have the certainty to *'enjoy the sun' within a safe atmosphere.*

In Latino culture the concept of *fiesta* (party) and celebration play a major role in the family development. Latinos celebrate birthdays, weddings, baptisms, graduations, etc. For instance, my Latino informants coincide that in their culture, *'there is always an excuse to celebrate'*. Celebrations include several guests, significant amounts of food and drinks, music and dance. A good example of this was described by Peter who travelled to Latin America for the first time in 2012 to meet his family-in-law. The couple was received by a *'delegation'* headed by his wife's father. Once at home, they were told that a welcome party had been organized for the next Saturday to celebrate their visit. When the announced date arrived, almost two hundred people were gathering together: parents, sisters, brothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins and close friends. Food and drinks were served and *"we danced hours and hours, I had never danced before, it was funny. They treated me as if they had known me for years. I felt really welcome, Latin Americans are nice people"*, Peter said. This way to celebrate, is notoriously different from the Norwegian one, Peter added. This was confirmed during my fieldwork, where I had the opportunity to be invited to different family celebrations. For Norwegians timekeeping and organization are *'mandatory'* to have a celebration: Invitations are sent well in advance, indicating the name of the person(s) who is (are) invited (bringing extra people would be a symbol of lack of respect), the specific time when the celebration is going to be held and the precise location. The host follows a strict plan where food is prepared for the expected guests and activities to have been detained within the schedule. Furthermore, in the parties I was invited to, none of the guests danced, neither had they played loud music. Contrarily, after eating, they listened to classical music or ballads while enjoyed some drinks and chatted.

Perceptions of Gender among Norwegian and Latino American Families

Latino American countries are known for their *"macho culture,"* where the *"macho"* or male (Englander et al., 2012) is the one in charge of nations, companies, and families. For years, Latin wives were economically dependent on their husbands; it means that man's income had to be enough to maintain his wife and family without

asking the woman to work (Fraser and Gordon, 1994). It was seen as a 'positive dependency,' allowing male to adopt a dominant position, where women were 'invisible' and often described as 'passive' and 'ignorant' (Stoler, 2002; Fraser and Gordon, 1994). Then, the female role implied household and childcare, while males, had the right to impose their ideas¹⁸ and the possibility to have extra-marital relations (Englander et al., 2012; Stoler, 2002).

Similarly, notwithstanding the fact that Norway and the Scandinavian society have been leading the women's movement for their emancipation, until the first half of the twentieth century the female role in these societies was also marginalised (Blom et al., 2005). As shown by SSB (2010) women in Norway still have averagely a lower salary compared to men and the majority of important roles are continues to be held by men. Moreover, according to a study on gender equality conducted by Hansen and Slagsvold (2012), in 7 out of 10 couples, the role played by women in housework and childcare is still more central than that of men. This study investigated the level of satisfaction in relationships that share housework or not, determining that the majority of Norwegian women are satisfied when they have the leading role in housekeeping (ibid).

Likewise, in Latin America, the *macho* practices continue to be socio-culturally accepted and reproduced, also among women (Englander et al., 2012; Gutmann, 1996). The Latin American female often assumes the responsibility for raising the children and running the house, while maintaining a religious and submissive role like the Virgin Mary, from whom the term *marianismo* derives (Stevens, 1973 in Englander et al., 2012:3; Skogrand et al., 2005). Indeed, according to Matthew Gutmann (1996), *machismo* and *marianismo* are socio-cultural conditions actively perpetrated by women. For example, when a Latin man is getting married, one can hear his mother saying: "*Hijo, recuerda que eres el hombre de la casa*" (son, remember that you are the man of the house). With this sentence, the mother is seeking to encourage her son to take control over his family by providing the family members with the required economic support (Fraser and Gordon, 1994), but also suggests that household chores should be carried strictly by women (Gutmann, 1996). Indeed, in Latin America is commonly said that women's macho mentality is stronger than the one developed by

¹⁸ Ideas were imposed even by physical aggression and violence toward women (See e.g. Englander et al., 2012).

men. In consequence, one can argue that women actively contribute to the reproduction of *machismo* ideas inside their nuclear family through the way of teaching their children. This mentality is also reproduced in other socio-economic spheres, e.g. the labour market where Latin American female hold 'typical' female positions including housework, nursing, administrative assistance and preschool and kindergarten teaching (World Bank, 2012). Men are, on the other hand, linked to 'prestigious' positions: Doctors, engineers, and politicians, just to name three of them (*ibid*). In fact, only 2 of the 20 Latin American countries have a woman on top of the national political power: Brazil with Dilma Rousseff¹⁹ and Chile with Michelle Bachelet (BBC, 2015).

Notwithstanding the facts above, Gutmann also writes about the oversimplification of the terms *mariaismo* and *machismo*. In "The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City", Gutmann (1996) points to the multifaceted man (and woman) in Latin-American societies, who behaves differently according to the people surrounding him and the daily situations. As a matter of fact, during my fieldwork, I observed how the role played by Latinos married to Norwegian women in the household and childcare is in many aspects similar to that of a Norwegian man. For instance, the housework in the majority of the cases was fairly shared between the partners. Moreover, when Latino men were economically dependent from their wives they had assumed the leading role in childrearing and household chores. Indeed, the majority of the Latin American men interviewed coincided to affirm that '*their family relationship is based on mutual cooperation*'. Similarly, I observed that Latin women married with Norwegian men also tried to reproduce, in many aspects, the Norwegian female behaviour by delegating "typical female activities" to their husbands, including the preparation of daily meals, childrearing, and housekeeping. These observations bluntly contrast with the stereotypical macho mentality registered in Latin American countries. Commonly, Latin American people seek to preserve the division of roles by teaching their sons courage, stoicism, arrogance, masculinity and virility (Gutmann 1996), and teaching their daughters femininity and how to be good wives and mothers (Englander et al., 2012). Moreover, as indicated by (Melhuus 1996), when female behaviour does not fall into the *marianismo* stereotype, then the woman could be seen as an open, liberal,

¹⁹ Dilma was recently removed from office through an impeachment process. See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37237513>

perfidious, promiscuous and shameless woman. Thus, I will argue that Latin Americans married with Norwegians are strongly influenced by Norwegian family traditions, which prevents the reproduction of *machismo* and *marianismo* practices among this particular group of individuals.

Moreover, Norway seeks to reduce the gender gap by promulgating the national gender equality policy which motivates women to take an active role in the national economy by promoting “equal status” and “equal opportunities and rights” (Regjeringen, 2007). Indeed, according to Nygren (2015), 4 of the ten richest persons in Norway are females. Moreover, a woman from Bergen holds the highest position in the Norwegian government: Erna Solberg. She is a 55-year-old woman, who has played an active role in the local, regional and national politics since as far as the 1980s is the Leader of the Conservative Party since 2004 and Norwegian Prime Minister since 2013 (Erna Solberg, n.d.). Additionally, in the Nordic country, the household work, and economic responsibilities are shared between partners. Thus, cooperation is extremely valued in the Norwegian family. For instance, Stein, a Norwegian doctor, father of 3 children, told me about the importance of sharing responsibilities. According to him, by distributing household work and childcare, the couple can finish the tasks faster, which reduces the stress levels and allows the partners to spend more time together. Tangible examples of this cooperation are the fathers who take the parental leave to not only to help their partners with the childcare but to have the opportunity to establish a stronger bond with their children. For instance, in the Norwegian streets, it is common to observe fathers pushing a baby’s pram with one hand, while the other carries the groceries to prepare dinner with the other.

The facts described in this section lead to the conclusion that mixed families adapt themselves to the socio-cultural environment in which the relationship has been built. Furthermore, Latino gender stereotypes are not reproduced among mixed families. On the contrary, partners establish a cooperation system that allows them to complete their task effectively and efficiently, having the opportunity to share more activities together. Additionally, if one of the partners does not enter the cooperation process, the relationship tends to be damaged, resulting in many cases of temporary separation or divorce.

The Migrants' Poor Family Vs. The Locals' Egalitarian One

Given the factors above, one can arrive at the following questions: What can be considered as an oppressive family? Does the concept of the egalitarian family really exist? Are images of family the main reason to toughen immigration policies restricting the entrance of certain aliens while allowing the arrival of others? As it will be discussed later in Chapter 3, family reunification policies are set for a variety of reasons including keeping homogeneity in the receiving society (Eriksen, 2010). They also seek to reduce the migration possibilities for further promoting marriages of convenience as a way to enter the richer societies (see e.g. Myrdhal, 2010). But particularly, family reunification policies seek to protect the most vulnerable members of society (women and children) from violence and domination typically presented in patriarchal societies (Rytter, 2010). Indeed, according to Westerners' (including Scandinavian) perspectives, the inflow of migrants from Muslim countries, Asia and South America brings in a set of norms typical of patriarchal and oppressive societies (see e.g. King and Lulle, 2016; Bonjour and Kraler, 2014; Eriksen, 2013; Rytter, 2010).

Additionally, family migrants, including Latin Americans, are often perceived by locals as less cultured, less educated, less sophisticated, less skilled and poorly integrated to the labour market (see Bonjour and Kraler, 2013:5). These views, therefore, help to reinforce Norwegian thoughts of superiority and supremacy over citizens from less developed nations and prevent Latinos from completely integrating and adapting to the host country.

Nevertheless, according to Staver (2015) and Liden (2005), elements similar to those found in ancestral societies are still existing over different continents. For instance, we have already seen that even Norway keeps a difference in salaries between women and men as well as in percentages of women in management positions (SSB, 2010), with the Nordic country not doing enough to enforce the existing laws to guarantee the rights of women. On the other hand, often the societies considered oppressive towards women offer them more flexibility and acceptance of their leading role in the family (Sanabria, 2007; Asiyanbola, 2005). Indeed in many places, including Latin America, men have been covering the heaviest jobs and tasks to provide food and all-out assistance to their family members, while female preserved

a more active role in maintaining the family together, rearing children and teaching them values and customs (see e.g. Grillo, 2008).

Conclusion to the chapter

This chapter introduced the reader to the Norwegian and Latin American notions of family and family life. It also allowed us to understand some of the socio-cultural differences that may influence the creation of tough family immigration policies seeking to restrict the entrance of foreign citizens to Norway.

It was said that there is not a universal definition of family as it is culturally and ideologically constructed according to the relationship between human beings and the society in which they interact. In consequence, the image of family and family life vary from one place to another creating conflicting viewpoints on the ways of building and upholding a family. These perspectives can, at the same time, influence policy makers' decision to produce restrictive immigration policies seeking to protect egalitarian cultures from the influence of oppressive and violent societies.

For instance, Latin America is often portrayed as an oppressive society governed by a patriarchal model in which men are depicted as dominant (and sometimes violent) entities, while women are described as submissive bodies controlled by men. Hence, this social model illustrates strong men with the social and moral obligation to provide their families and passive women who are at home looking after the children and doing domestic chores. Also, Latin American families are frequently associated with *familismo*, a concept that supposes strong familial ties between father, mother, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and even close friends. By keeping this relationship, Latinos claim to have an extra hand to help to achieve their goals, reducing stress, sharing expenses and finding mutual cooperation. However, this chapter showed that strong family ties may interfere with Latino immigrant's adaptation and integration process, producing emotional conflicts among mixed families.

In contrast to the widespread notion of the patriarchal and inequitable Latin American society, Norway is normally perceived as an egalitarian country in which women and men have the same rights and obligations. In this nation, individuals are

thought to accept and respect each other across various social divides and differences. In consequence, any kind of discrimination tends to be rejected and repudiated. It, therefore, allows national citizens to freely choose a partner and form a family following their own desires without fear of being socially relegated.

However, notwithstanding the perception of Latin America, neither that continent nor Norway follows a unique pattern of family. The new social order, globalization and modernization have contributed to the constitution of new types of family, which are gaining territory among the two geographical areas. Indeed, it is normal to observe not only traditional families but cohabitants and single-parent families everywhere. Also, same-sex families and foster and adoptive families are gaining territory, however their acceptance in Latin America is still low compared to that of Norway. In consequence, these new models of family have also had an impact on the family legal frame, leading policy makers to reformulate the existing policies (including family reunification policies).

CHAPTER 3. REGULATIONS OF FAMILY IMMIGRATION TO NORWAY

[F]amily policies regulate matters close to the heart, and it is often argued that successful family policies must be by widely held norms and values. While there is certainly merit to this argument, it should be remembered that the Nordic countries were not as “modern” as they may seem now when key policies were implemented [...] Norms and values shape policies, but it can also be argued that policies shape norm. Making choices available is likely to alter behaviour and norms at least in parts of the population²⁰.

Chapter 2 explored the Norwegian and Latin American views of family and family life. It was shown that perceptions of family are affected by external factors including policies, religion, cultural and social values, globalization and technology (Grillo, 2008). Additionally, the new social order is leading to the creation and proliferation of new types of family including cohabitants, multicultural families, same-sex families, and single-parent families, adoptive and foster families which are gaining territory in western societies. Also, these new patterns of family clearly influence the modification of existing family policies (Gender Norway, 2014). For instance, family reunification policies are toughened, in many cases, to prevent the entrance of individuals from oppressive nations, who may enter into conflict with more egalitarian life styles.

Chapter 3 will examine the Norwegian family immigration policies to understand their effects on mixed families settled in Norway. First, this chapter will discuss the anthropological approach to family immigration policies; then, it will portray the evolution of these policies in Norway, focusing on marriages of convenience and the income requirement. Finally, this chapter will analyse the public debate on family reunification policies, allowing the reader to comprehend the different understandings of family immigration to Norway.

This will prepare the ground for Chapter 4, which opens a discussion on the effects that current family reunification policies may have on a minority and often invisible and

²⁰ See Grødem 2014:64

an imperceptible group of migrants from Latin America and their Norwegian family members settled in Norway.

A Brief Introduction to Family Reunification Policies

The article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of the United Nations (UN) and the article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) declare the right to establish a family as universal, unrestrained by religion, race or nationality (EU, 2015; UDHR, 2014). Also, it is added that public authorities must respect private and family life and guarantee the rights and freedoms of others (ibid). However, despite the international mechanisms to protect the family as the fundamental moral and social unit, the same tools used to bring families together may become a legal instrument to keep them apart (see e.g. Bledsoe and Sow 2008:3). For instance, family reunification policies are legal mechanisms to allow national citizens to reunite with their foreign spouses or family members. However, in order to be admitted into a receiving country, applicants have to fulfil a series requirements – being married to a citizen is only one of them. In this process, migrants are divided into desired and undesired according to economic, social and cultural criteria (see also Staver 2014). In consequence, undesired migrants' right to have a family may be restricted by tough immigration policies.

Therefore, contested perceptions of family immigration processes are often debated in the public sphere (see e.g. Hagelund, 2003; Myrdahl, 2010). On the one hand, defenders claim that family immigration brings a series of benefits to the receiver countries. For example, they indicate that immigrants do the jobs that natives refuse to do, offer nationals the possibility to learn different languages, and allow locals to learn and understand cultures different from their own (see e.g. Swing 2016). On the other hand, opponents claim that migrants could be a threat to the national identity and may pollute the national society through vandalism, violence and criminal acts (see e.g. Eriksen 2010). As a matter of fact, the Norwegian 2004 Green Paper on the New Immigration Act indicated that, in many cases, family immigration is perceived by foreigners as the easiest way to be legally accepted into Norway, therefore, some immigrants use this type of migration as a strategy to have a better life rather than

establishing a real family (NOU 2004:20:2012 in Myrdahl, 2010:108). Additionally, the same paper also pointed out that marriages of convenience increase because of the applicants' desire to have a "better life" and the existing gap between developed and third world countries (NOU 2004: 20: 231, see also 229 in Myrdahl, 2010:108).

Also, the growing number of family reunification cases and the continuous debates on this theoretical issue lead governments to the creation of immigration regulatory entities seeking to find a balance between the family and the national interests. Indeed, each country has certain departments responsible for welfare and immigration that are directly bound to national laws (UN, 2016). In Norway, the institution responsible for these subjects are NAV, *Skatteetaten*, UDI, and IMDi:

- *NAV*: The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration is in charge of the welfare of all people residing in the country (NAV, 2015);
- *Skatteetaten*: The Norwegian Tax Administration, manages every economic aspect regarding individuals and companies as well as it registers the personal address of Norwegian citizens and immigrants (Skatteetaten, n.d);
- *UDI*: is responsible for controlling and processing immigration cases in Norway, as well as expulsion cases and running of asylum reception centres (*UDI, n.d*);
- *IMDi*: is the *Integrerings- og Mangfoldsdirektoratet* [Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)], responsible for setting in place the administrative regulations addressing refugees residence and integration issues in Norway (IMDi, 2016). This department is responsible, among other tasks, of establishing language courses and integration programmes aimed at introducing refugees to the Norwegian society and culture (ibid).

According to SSB²¹, the immigration rates in Norway would continue increasing. Indeed, projections show that by 2030 approximately 25% of the Norwegian population will be consisting of immigrants, compared to a current 15.6% (SSB, 2015). One of the main reasons to migrate to Norway is, perhaps, the national economic stability which in conjunction with beautiful landscapes and safe environments make the country an attractive place to study, work and live (Blom, 2015). Additionally, when the aforementioned conditions are given, the nation may experience the creation of new

²¹ Statistics Norway- SSB

types of families. Therefore, the local social structures are going to be affected, obliging governments to adjust the existing policies to protect their national interests (Eriksen, 2013). Thus, the departments listed above have a major role in delimiting migration patterns and managing the distribution of resources according to equitable principles.

Anthropological Approaches to Family Immigration Policies

As portrayed in chapter 1, few anthropologists have studied family immigration policies. Indeed, the analysis of this theoretical issue has been domain of other sciences including sociology, political sciences and economy (Wedel and Feldman, 2005:1). Nevertheless, the increasing migration rates and the continuous debates on this topic have captivated people's attention. Consequently, more anthropologists are now seeking to analyse policies from different angles to understand the relationship between power, gender, illegality, poverty, exclusionism and the global movements (see e.g. Baba 2013; Shore and Wright, 2005; Wedel and Feldman, 2005).

Policies are perceived as classificatory apparatuses with "*contextually-encoded meanings*" (Baba, 2013:3). Indeed, they shape human lives in many different ways including education, health, work, and family, just to mention a few (see e.g. Shore and Wright 2005). According to Malkki (1992), immigration policies are understood as unilateral devices of control used by governments to restrict the entry of aliens to a specific territory. Also, immigration policies allow or restrain people's opinions, actions, rights and privileges, depending on their race, traditions and socio-economic level (Baba, 2013; Eggebø 2012; Shore and Wright, 2005). Thus, anthropologists cannot understand immigration policies as absolute and undisputable truths (Wedel and Feldman, 2005). They rather should see immigration laws as a contested subject to be critically analysed (Baba, 2013).

Further, immigration policies often become a source of conflicts and tensions between policy makers and immigrants. On the one hand, policy makers are depicted as powerful subjects able to shape collective values and control social conducts, behaviours and manners (ibid). On the other hand, immigrants are portrayed as vulnerable beings whose voices are silenced and rights are often violated (Staver,

2014). However, by presenting policy makers as a dominant entity and immigrants as dominated subject, one can increase the gap between 'us' and the 'other' (see also Baba, 2013; Eggebø, 2012; Hagelund, 2003). However, the idea of dominant and dominated is also a contested one. Indeed, immigrants keep successfully shifting from one place to another regardless of the existing policies and, in consequence, governments' ability to control these flows turns to be a limited one (Livnat, 2014:276).

In addition, as the ethnic composition of spaces, "*ethnoscape*", is constantly changing due to the continuous movement of immigrants, refugees, guest workers and tourists (Appadurai, 1990:297), anthropologists, studying family reunification policies and immigration policies in general, should carefully explore the notion of space to comprehend the socio-political context of policies, the social imaginaries of distant territories and the immigrants' desire to move (Appadurai, 1990). In doing so, they have to use what Geertz (1973) denominated "thick description" to identify the different structures, codes, symbols and thoughts that influence immigrants' decision to relocate. Also, to have a complete understanding of family reunification policies, anthropologists have to examine the national and international context in which policies have been created and their effects (Shore, 2012).

Moreover, in cases of family reunification, one cannot ignore that immigration policies have a tremendous impact on the lives of immigrants and their families, but also affect the decisions taken by other actors including the public entities (e.g. schools and hospitals), national citizens, and local businesses (Baba, 2013). Thus, before deciding whether to create, maintain or modify immigration laws, policymakers are obliged to discuss the possible effects on both locals and foreigners (IOM, 2010). Likewise, with the new socio-economic order and the constant international movements, governments feel the obligation to strengthen the existent immigration laws to protect their national interests from economic, social and cultural losses (Vertovec, 2011). This feeling is, perhaps, stronger in homogeneous nations with little or inexistent racial diversity and where most of the people share the same ideas, language, economic capacity, cultural values, traditions and religion (Eriksen, 2013). To them, immigrants may represent a risk to the national cohesion because they bring with themselves a paraphernalia of languages, rituals, traditions, habits, and values which delay adaptation and integration processes (see e.g. Stolcke, 1995).

However, this protectionist position is a contested one. Several authors like Blom (2015) claim that immigrants are the perfect vehicle for cultural exchanges, enriching the receiver society through new languages, music, arts, dances, and cuisine. Moreover, the OIM (2010) points out that immigrants could be seen as the main motor for disseminating different opinions on norms and practices exerted on both societies; the host and their own. Thus, in line with Write's (2006) position, one can suggest that anthropological studies on family reunification policies would be a valuable tool to understand the current socio-political transformation and the effects that policies may have on local and foreign societies. In addition, through ethnographic studies, anthropologists can analyse immigration laws from the viewpoint of policy makers, locals, and immigrants, guaranteeing an unbiased interpretation of their findings and contributing to the creation of fairer policies (Geertz, 1973).

Consequently, anthropologists working with family reunification policies have the task to observe, analyse and discuss the policy-making processes to identify the reasons that have led policy makers to create the norms in the way they have been created and to understand the interpretation of these laws at the ground level by locals and immigrants (Baba, 2013; Write, 2006; Wedel et al., 2005).

Family Reunification in Norway and the Evolution of its Regulations

Before exploring the debate on family reunification in Norway, one must have a clear understanding of its legal frame. Thus, the following lines display the definition of family immigration given by UDI:

Family immigration is also called family reunification or forming a family. Those who apply for family immigration are usually the spouse, cohabitant or child of someone who lives in Norway. Other types of family members who may apply are parents who have children in Norway, those who are going to marry someone in Norway (fiancées/fiancés), foster children and full siblings.²²

²² UDI, 2016. Available at: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/family-immigration/>

The main three reasons for people moving to Norway are family reunification, labour, and refugee (SSB, 2015). Perhaps, family reunification is the main focus of discussion among legislators because of its potential capacity to allow the entrance of a higher number of aliens bound to sponsors in a country (see e.g. Bonjour and Kraler, 2014).

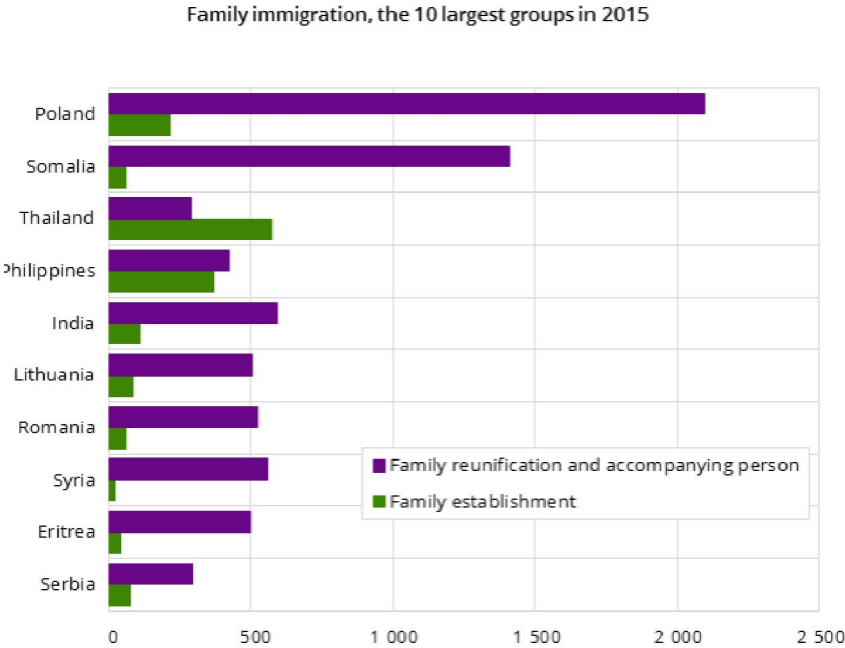
Immigrants by reason for immigration				
	2015	Change in per cent		Total immigration since 1990
		2014 - 2015	2005 - 2015	
Total	49 043	-1.9	104.7	737 588
Labour	18 010	-15.9	180.0	248 216
Family	16 580	2.0	58.5	266 749
Refugee	9 221	31.2	134.3	141 312
Education	4 950	-1.45	63.2	76 794
Other	246	-1.2	141.2	3 762
Unknown	36	.	.	755

Source: Statistics Norway
 Available at: <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvgrunn/aar-innvandringsgrunn/2016-06-17#content>

Indeed, compared to the other two motivations, family reunification is often considered by policymakers as a direct threat to the mechanisms established to curtail the number of arrivals in the state (Takenaka, 2007). In consequence, this perception opens a debate on the paradox of intimate relationships in Norway (Eggebø 2012). According to Eggebø (2012), the contradiction arises when nationals assert to have an open and liberal view of intimate relationships but their rights to family reunification are limited, narrowed and restricted by immigration policies (Eggebø, 2012:8). Indeed, as shown in chapter 2, Norway is open to other types of families including same-sex families, cohabitants, single-parent families, foster families and adoptive families, among the most common ones; however, establishing a mixed family may represent a challenge to Norwegian citizens especially when the partner belongs to a non-EU nation due to tough immigration laws.

According to SSB (2016), family reunification with 16,580 cases (33.80%) out of a total of 49,043 new arrivals from non-Nordic countries in 2015, constitutes the second reason for immigration to Norway after labour. Albeit, the fact that in the 23 year period

between 1990 and 2013 family reunification has represented the main motivation (40%) for moving to Norway (SSB, 2015). Additionally, a study of immigration patterns, made by SSB in 2006, revealed that most of the family reunification cases were registered among Norwegian-born without immigrant background and non- European citizens (SSB, 2006). Also, 70% of those marrying Norwegians were women mainly from Thailand, Philippines, and Russia; while men married to Norwegian women were mainly from Sweden, Denmark, USA and UK (SSB, 2010). Nevertheless, marriages between two immigrants were mainly registered among African and Asian citizens who have been naturalised in Norway (SSB, 2006). Finally, the report for SSB, written by Sandnes and Østby (2015), shows that 2008 marked a sharp decrease in marriages between immigrants and Norwegian without an immigrant background. This is a consequence of the family reunification law written in 2008 and entered into force on 1st January 2010, which obliged Norwegian citizens to fulfil strict requirements in order to reunify with their non-EEA partners (UDI *regelverk*, 2016).



Source: Statistics Norway
 Available at: <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvgrunn/aar-innvandringsgrunn/2016-06-17#content>

Moreover, Norwegian regulations on family reunification cannot be analysed independently from the broader framework of international conventions and directives on the topic, and the history of migratory flows to the Scandinavian country from the

1960s onwards (Cappelen et al., 2011). The 1948 UDHR²³ and the 1950 ECHR²⁴ set the basis of international regulations protecting the right to establish a family in one's own country or in a third country when the conditions are not adequate to do it in his own nation (EU, 2015; UN, 1948). They also establish the importance of the family as the founding element of society and democracy. Nevertheless, with a steady rise in the numbers of migrants reaching Norway, policy makers have drastically increased the requirements to enter the country to halt or curb the migrant wave often perceived as threatening national cohesion [Barne Likestillings og Integrerings Department (Children, Gender Equality and Integration), 2012]. For instance, the cases of Patricia and Sandra (her sister), who despite coming from the same family and having the same social, economic and cultural conditions, had to experience different immigration processes:

When I came to Norway, twelve years ago, things were different. This country did not host too many immigrants and moving to here was not as difficult as today. Indeed, when I applied to family reunification, the authorities gave me a temporary visa to wait in Norway for their final decision. The process lasted around three months and neither my husband nor I were called for an interview. Nowadays, the number of migrants to Norway has increased and, unfortunately, some of them come to take advantage of the welfare system, living at expenses of the State and damaging the image of all immigrants. I believe that it has become the main reason for toughening the current immigration. For instance, my sister, who got married to a Norwegian citizen three years ago, was not as lucky as me during the immigration process. To have the residence permit approved, her husband had to demonstrate a minimum income through bank statements and a copy of his employment contract. Also, they had to answer a questionnaire made by UDI to prove their relationship. The process was also longer than mine and they looked exhausted. They used to call for information at least twice a month, but the officers always told them to wait

²³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights

²⁴ European Convention of Human Rights

for an e-mail or letter with updates as they had too many cases to be processed.

Patricia H. (Personal conversation, October 27th 2016)

Analysing the historic context, it can be noted that from the middle 70s, Norway has been promoting policies and financing courses to educate its 'new citizens', in order to integrate them within the Scandinavian society (Staver, 2014; Eggebø 2012; Cappelen et al., 2011). Nevertheless, it is only from 1996 that the national government established language training, labour market integration, and other initiatives to prevent racism and xenophobia in order to integrate immigrants in the country [Determinants of International Migrations (DEMIG, 2015)]. Also, the laws established during the mentioned period did not set any limit for reducing family migration, notwithstanding a change in the regulations accepting labour migrants, which from 1975 completely banned unskilled aliens from settling in the state (Cappelen et al., 2011). The first restrictions on family reunions were set in 1982 when a limit of age (20 years old) was established for bringing children or family members into the country (DEMIG, 2015). However, it was only from 2003 that the government (*Regjering*) started to toughen family reunification laws for applicants covered by humanitarian grounds (asylum seekers and refugees) by setting economic requirements for the sponsor (ibid). These changes, according to Cappelen, Ouren and Skjerpen (2011), have been done due to a growing number of immigrants (mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and former Yugoslavia) trying to circumvent legal restrictions for settling in the country. Moreover, with the New Immigration Act of 15 May 2008, which entered into force on 1 January 2010, those foreign citizens residing in Norway on specialised labour grounds²⁵ are entitled to speedy family reunification processes and are also offered the possibility to obtain a permanent residence permit (DEMIG 2015). Finally, the 2011 Immigration Law covers family reunification cases for registered partners and married couples when both parties are over eighteen (Lovdata 2015). In these cases, the sponsor (the person living in Norway) must belong to one of the following groups: being either Norwegian or a Nordic citizen who resides or will reside in the country; being a foreigner with permanent residence in this country; being a foreigner who is or

²⁵ Specialised workers are considered those people with a salary of NOK 500,000 or above, who have upper secondary studies or above and a qualification needed on the Norwegian employment market (DEMIG 2015).

will be legally residing in the kingdom of Norway with a valid permit to stay, which can serve as grounds to apply for a permanent residence permit; or being a foreigner with a residence permit according to the Norwegian law of immigration § 34 ²⁶when the system of collective protection has not yet ended (ibid).

Moreover, the immigration act adds that Norwegians, with or without immigrant background, must fulfil the following criteria to be sponsors for their non-EEA partners:

- Assured subsistence equal to NOK 305 200 per year pre-tax or having completed a full-time higher education programme; have served mandatory military service or mandatory civilian service; had a tax registered net worth of over 1 million NOK in the last two tax settlements and be over 23 years of age; have belonged to a situation referred in the Norwegian Immigration Regulations § 10 -8 second section; have a permit as a skilled worker on the grounds of competence or as a service provider, self-employed contractor; have a residence permit that cannot form the basis for a permanent residence permit.
- A proof of residence;
- Both applicants are over 23 years of age;
- The sponsor must not have received financial assistance in the 12 months previous to the date of application, according to the Norwegian law of Social Services (UDI regelverk, 2016).

The mentioned requirements, however, are highly contested among the Norwegians interviewed during my fieldwork. Some, mainly young women, consider that requirements for family reunification may be an obstacle to establish a family with a foreign partner, especially if he/she belongs to a third world country and the Norwegian partner do not have a full-time job:

There is a clear contradiction between the present immigration law and the Norwegian common way of life. For example, many Norwegians live

²⁶ § 34. Kollektiv beskyttelse i en massefluksituasjon – Collective protection in a situation of mass migration

Dersom det foreligger en massefluksituasjon, kan Kongen i statsråd beslutte at det kan gis kollektiv beskyttelse etter denne paragrafen. Kongen i statsråd beslutter også når adgangen til å gi kollektiv beskyttelse skal bortfalle.

Transl.:

Whenever it subsists a situation of mass migration, the King together with the Council of Ministers can decide to provide collective protection after this paragraph. The King together with the Council of Ministers decides moreover when the access to collective protection should be terminated.

together from a young age, have part-time jobs, and share expenses. However, the norm is asking us to be over 23 and prove a minimum income (which I, personally, have troubles to demonstrate) to be suitable sponsors for our foreigner spouses.

Hilde C. (Personal conversation, December 20th 2016)

Others, however, perceive immigration policies as an effective mechanism to prevent foreigners to live at the expense of the welfare system:

I think that current immigration policies help to narrow the number of immigrants who come to Norway seeking to obtain the benefits offered by the welfare state. Because of this situation I have to agree with the existing regulation as it is unfair that Norwegians work and pay taxes to support people who do not try to find a job or learn the language [...] I also filled in many papers, had an interview at the UDI's office and my wife had to wait almost 5 months to have an answer. However, I believe that officers were simply doing their jobs, so that they have to analyse the information submitted by us (and hundreds of people more) before giving a decision. Also, regardless of the time spent during the process, if you meet all the requirements your partner's residence permit will be granted.

Morten S. (Personal conversation, October 15th 2016)

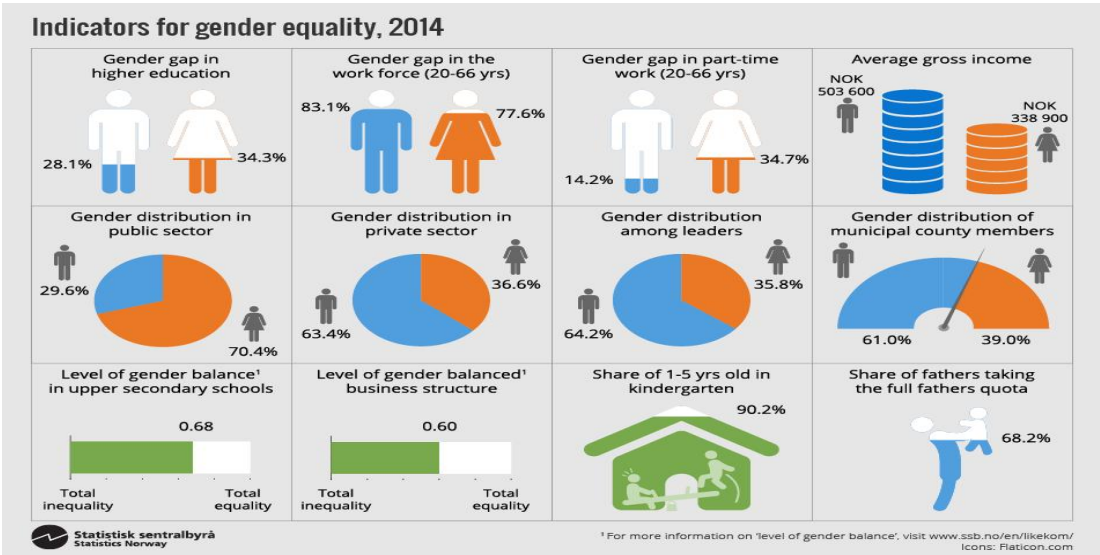
Nevertheless, the aforementioned conditions do not apply when the sponsor has been granted asylum due to humanitarian grounds (Regjeringen, 2014). In these cases, family reunification is permitted for the nuclear family without the sponsor having to fulfil any of the aforementioned requirements as long as the partnership was established prior to emigrating from the country of origin (Lovdata, 2015).

Furthermore, the modification of family reunification policies have chronologically undergone a variety of changes within the past 4 decades (Hagelund 2002, 2003; Myrdahl 2010). Policies have gone from an extremely open and liberal view of immigrant inflows to a current restrictive approach (as shown above in this subchapter through the cases of Patricia and Sandra). Thus, these modifications have been corresponding to a shift in the social imagery and perspective of immigrants, with mass media playing the main role in shedding a negative light over aliens, in order to urge

policymakers to do more to protect locals against the strangers and the supposed threat they represent to local socio-cultural values (Staver, 2014; Eggebø, 2010).

However, Cooper (2005) writes that Norway had a gradual process of cutting immigration dated back to the 1970s when it first started to ban unregulated labour migration. Nevertheless, the share of migrants coming in search of an employment opportunity shifted to asylum and family reunification as motivations behind moving to Norway (ibid). Therefore, the government had been forced by public opinion as far back as 1985 to take a stand and establish barriers for reducing migration or facing an increasingly unsatisfied electorate voting for the anti-immigration party (Progress Party) (Østby, 2013). However, the socialist government was striving for social equality and an equitable treatment of local and immigrant citizens by its welfare institutions (Øye, 2006; Cooper, 2005). To succeed in this mission Norwegian policy makers have been opting to maintain a sustainable number of foreigners' inflow by reducing the possibilities of finding legal stratagems for migrants to settle in the country (Østby, 2013).

Income: the Toughest Requirement to Family Reunification



Source: Statistics Norway.
 Available at: <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/nokkeltall/key-figures-on-gender-equality>

According to the data provided by SSB, at the beginning of 2015 approximately 669,400 immigrants from 222 different countries were registered in Norway where labour and family reunification were the two most important reasons to migrate (SSB, 2015). Between 1990 and 2006, half of the immigrants were women mainly from Russia, Thailand, and Philippines who sought family reunification, while the majority of men during the same period were refugees (SSB, 2008). In the light of this situation, the Norwegian government decided to toughen the border control measures (The Local, 2015) and strengthen immigration laws to meet an increasing sense of anxiety among Norwegians without immigrant background (Views and News from Norway, 2016). These measures coincide with the notion that when high rates of immigration are presented, especially in small and homogeneous countries like Norway, politicians are urged to move immigration to the top of the political debate (see e.g. Eriksen, 2013; Eggebø, 2012; Vertovec, 2011). By doing so, legislators are able to discuss the social, cultural and economic effects that immigration might have on the nation and prevent possible social and economic losses (see e.g. Eriksen, 2010)

In cases of family migration to Norway, for example, the income requirement has become the most effective way to prevent the entry of non-EEA citizens to the kingdom (Staver, 2014; Eggebø, 2012). An illustration of this situation was narrated by Angela, a young woman from Guatemala:

During two years, I was separated from my husband because he did not fulfil the income requirement imposed by UDI to allow foreign spouses to migrate to Norway. By the time of the application, I was already pregnant. However, the pregnancy was not an impediment for the government to deny us the right to live together in Norway. Ironically, my baby would be free to stay in Norway, but his mother would need to wait in Guatemala.

Angela C. (Personal conversation, January 4th, 2016)

Like Angela, other informants also pointed out that economic requirements interfere with their desires of establishing a (mixed) family in Norway. Also, immigration policies may cause family separations and keep children away from their own parents.

The idea that immigrants should own enough resources to survive without obtaining government's assistance is totally understandable. However, a family can also have good living conditions with a lower salary, for example,

buying the products on offer and reducing the consumption of luxury goods or unnecessary things.

Bente S. (Personal conversation, July 19th 2016)

Furthermore, family reunification policies work as classificatory apparatuses dividing immigrants into 'desired' and 'undesired' based on socio-economic criteria (Baba 2013; Bendixsen 2016; Staver 2014). Anthropologists have suggested that immigration policies are employed to prevent minority ethnic groups from entering the so-called "white countries" (Beider, 2012:53). On this matter, Muller Myrdahl (2010) argued that by seeking to prevent forced marriages and marriages of convenience, family reunification policies have become a "racial project", combining racialization²⁷ processes and border controls to restrict the entrance of different others (Myrdahl, 2010:104). However, Anne Staver (2014) challenged this theory. According to her, immigration policies should not be perceived as a racial fence but as an economic barrier. It means that if an immigrant (independently from his/her race or ethnicity), is able to document the economic sufficiency required to enter Norway, he/she would be then considered as a 'desired' immigrant; while less privileged foreign citizens whose sponsors cannot demonstrate the income required would be then categorized as 'undesired' (Staver, 2014). Nevertheless, class and race are not necessarily unconnected entities, they rather work together. Thus, one can argue that family reunification policies are both a racial project and an economic barrier, as poorer people tend to be darker skinned due to colonial discursive residue and the various forms of discrimination and exclusion that follow from it (Ystanes, 2016; Stolcke, 1993).

I compared the data collected during my fieldwork with the statistics submitted by SSB to understand how family reunification processes could be affected by the imposition of an income requirement. As a result of this analysis, I found out that female applicants from Latin America (Latinas) have higher possibilities than male applicants from the same continent (Latinos) to have a residence permit approved. It happens mainly because of the economic situation registered by Norwegian male sponsors, who normally have full-time jobs and higher salaries in comparison with female

²⁷ "Racialization is something everybody does: We register differences between black and white skin color, and this registration is without a positive or negative evaluation. But when we start to add positive or negative attributes (*kjennetegn*) to this registration of differences, we get a negative picture of for example the black person, or a negative system of meanings that can be used to exclude the black person. That is racism. While racialization is a natural cognitive process, racism is a negative continuation of that process" (Lien 1997:20 in Gullestad, 2004:186)

sponsors²⁸. Additionally, the indicators for gender equality submitted by SSB (2016), show that female's gross income is in average 33% lower than male's gross income and 34,7% women and 14,2% men of the working-age population in Norway have a part-time job²⁹. As the Norwegian family immigration policy states that Norwegian sponsors "*must have an income of at least NOK 305 200 per year pre-tax now... [And they] cannot have received social security benefits during the last 12 months*"³⁰, one can conclude that in effect this regulation restricts some Norwegians (especially female sponsors and social security beneficiaries) from choosing a non-European partner and establishing a family with him/her in Norway.

Gender Gap and Income Requirement

Hansen and Slagsvold (2012), in their study for the *Norsk Institutt for Forskning om Oppvekst, Velferd og Aldring* (Norwegian Institute for Research on Adolescence, Welfare and Aging, NOVA), claim that Norway is one of the world leading countries in gender equality. The report shows that Norwegian regulations have benefited women by aiming to redistribute the time spent home on childrearing and domestic duties between the two sexes, thus increasing women's accessibility to the labour market (Hansen and Slagsvold, 2012). These policy's changes led Norwegian females to pass from a 45% to approximately 68% of women in working age participating in the national employment market, whereas men have seen a slight decrease in their participation from 78% to a 73% within the past four decades (SSB, 2016; Hansen and Slagsvold, 2012). According to the Gender and Pay report, submitted by Ministry of Children and Equality in 2008, female participation is still partly segregated (Regjeringen, 2008). Female and male labour force participation is centred in different areas, women work fewer hours than men, particularly when covering the role of mother as well, hold fewer

²⁸ See table Indicators for gender equality in municipalities, Norway - 2014

²⁹ See Indicators for gender equality in municipalities, Norway-2014. Available at: <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/likekom/aar/2016-03-03>

³⁰ See requirements for family reunification in Norway. Available at: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/family-immigration/family-immigration-with-norwegian-or-nordic-citizen/?f=nor&c=col#link-1180>

management positions and receive an average income³¹ of almost kroner 100,000 less than their male colleagues (ibid). The pattern that was also observed during my fieldwork and confirmed by the Norwegians interviewed. This gap has a direct influence on the formation and establishment of mixed families as among the requisites for family reunification, the most important of which is the income requirement (Staver, 2014; Eggebø, 2012).

My fieldwork has offered me the opportunity to explore the *modus vivendi* of Latino-Norwegian families settled in Bergen, which allowed me to see anthropological theories and immigration practices, as well as institutional targets and the challenges faced by mixed families, in relation to one another. Some narratives show the discrimination faced by Norwegian women in the formation of intimate relations with non-EEA partners. Cecilie's story is a case in point.

Cecilie met her husband in 2012, she was working in a museum and he was a Master student. Few months after establishing their relationship, the couple decided to get married "to formalize" the partnership. The couple fulfilled all the legal requirements for getting married in Norway and the ceremony was celebrated without complications. However, the challenges began few months before Cecilie's husband student visa expired. By then, she was expecting a baby and going through the pregnancy process with her husband was a strong desire of hers. Hence, the couple began to investigate the different possibilities and the legal methods for her husband to extend the stay in Norway; family reunification was the option that first came to their minds, however, as Cecilie's income was too low to be a suitable sponsor, the couple opted for extending the husband's study permit. To fulfil the requirements he needed to have at least NOK 100 920 in his bank account, being a full time student and having an admission granted (UDI, n.d. b). Thus, Cecilie moved some of her savings to her husband's account and he applied to a different Master programme. Being admitted to the same institution and fulfilling all the requirements to obtain a student visa, Cecilie's foreign husband applied for the visa extension, successfully obtaining it. The family's current situation is stable, he studies and works and she is still at the same museum. Their son now goes to the 'barnehage' and they live in one of the student residences from the

³¹ "Income consists of income from employment (paid employment and selfemployment), capital gains, and transfers such as housing benefit, child benefit, unemployment benefit, etc".

<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/39b49bdffe6f44faa80f6c3f26de-2b8a/no/pdfs/nou200820080006000dddpdfs.pdf>

Studentsamskipnaden i Bergen [Student Welfare Organisation in Bergen (SIB)]. However, the future for this family is uncertain. Cecilie's husband residence permit would soon expire and her economic situation does not allow the couple to demonstrate the minimum income required to apply for family reunification.

This story illustrates how harsh bureaucratic processes, and especially high income requirements, may be an obstacle to the unity of mixed families. In fact, as Cecilie's family, some of the interviewees have been obliged to find a loophole that allow them to overcome the obstacles presented by the income requirement. Thus, I agree with Block (2014:1442-1443) that existing requirements tend to restrict citizens from lower strata to live together in Europe with their foreign partners.

Contrasting the story of Cecilie we have the one of Jan. He is a young engineer working in the oil industry who met Paula overseas on a business trip. After a period of two months he decided to marry her and bring her with him to Norway: The paper work was done in Latin America and neither Paula nor Jan were called for interview: Also, Paula's residence permit was approved just one month after handing the documentation in. Nowadays, the couple lives in Bergen, Paula takes Norwegian lessons and is waiting for her ID number to apply to the University.

Thus, by analysing these two examples, one can reaffirm Staver's argument that class is stronger than race or ethnicity while applying to family reunification (Staver, 2014:466). It, therefore, portrays Norwegian immigration policies as elitists, preventing low-income earners to reunite with their non-EEA partners (see also Block 2014; Staver 2014). However, one could also say that family reunification policies discriminate along gender divisions, making it more difficult for Norwegian women to marry foreigners than men. This situation is perhaps associated to the maintenance of "racial" hierarchies. For instance, Ystanes (2016:50) indicates that in the history, Latin America have to a large degree depended upon the control of the sexuality of white women, so that they give birth to white, legitimate descendants, thus reproducing the elite and maintaining blood purity (see also Stolcke, 1993). White men, on the other hand, sought not only to maintain the European elite and blood purity through legitimate offspring but they were always able to enter into sexual relationships with darker skinned women to improve the race and develop a nations' project of whitening (*proyecto nacional de blanqueamiento*) (Ystanes, 2016: 51). In consequence, I will

question what kind of families are the Norwegian authorities creating through the application of the current immigration policies? Could a 'real' family be measured through the sponsor's income? Is the income requirement preventing or rather contributing to creating marriages of convenience?

Nationalism and the debate on family reunification

Public debate on family reunification in Norway is tied to the Norwegian imaginary of national identity. National identity is the combination of meaningful symbols, e.g. food, dresses, handicrafts, dances and tales (Eriksen, 1993). According to Golubović (2011), this concept differs from that of identity as it is not a natural phenomenon but a socio-cultural construction. National identity, therefore, is the representation of a cultural uniqueness, which tends to suppress individual non-homogeneity to the social and cultural norms, leading sporadically to extreme forms of nationalism (Golubović, 2010; Van Meijl, 2008). Nationalism or the intensification of a national project in Norway arise after the 17th of May 1814, when the Norwegian independence from Denmark was declared (Elloay, 2013). Norwegians wanted to be recognized as a unique society (different from Sweden and Denmark) (Eriksen, 1993), creating what Benedict Anderson (1991) would describe as an 'imagined community'. In doing so, they sought to promote egalitarian ideals, social inclusion, gender equality and international cooperation (Gullestad 2004). This process, however, must be analysed as a progressive one, built step by step in a European age in which national movements were spreading throughout the continent (Elloay, 2013). From 1814 until the first years of 1900 Norway developed through its writers, artists, and literates a vast range of cultural masterpieces aimed at creating and shaping its national identity among every single Norwegian citizen (Kohn, 2008). Nowadays, in spite of having internal differences, several dialects and two official languages (Bokmål and Nynorsk), one can suggest that Norway has a sole national identity which makes proud citizens (Eriksen, 1993).

However, the efforts to build a national identity are affected, in many cases, by mass media, globalization, and migration waves (see e.g. Van Meijl 2008; Gullestad 2002; Appadurai 1996) , as imaginaries of remote areas are easily shared and reproduced

at large scales, influencing individuals' life style. In consequence, processes such as migration, are often perceived as a threat for the national cohesion and political, social, spatial and economic hegemony (see also, Eggebø, 2012; Van Meijl, 2008). This phenomenon is particularly observed in small and homogeneous societies, such as Norway, where national citizens tend to assume that immigrants (especially from nations considered to have an "oppressive culture") represent a 'high risk' for the country as they carry with themselves customs and values (Eriksen, 2013; Eggebø, 2012; Vertovec, 2011; Grillo, 2008; Stolcke, 1995).

Nevertheless, in Norway, the perception of migrants is not univocal. It varies depending on the immigrant's background, religious affiliation, race, education level and economic status. In other words, positive or negative perceptions of migrants in Norway would depend on the proximity of socio-cultural values between immigrants and Norwegians (Thanem, 2014). For instance, according to the research conducted by Thanem for his Master Thesis, Norwegians often have a negative perception of individuals from Muslim countries and a positive opinion of Southeast Asian population (ibid). These thoughts are influenced by the social roles held by the two groups of migrants: on the one hand, Asians are often associated with 'peaceful religions' and seen as specialised workers who seek to integrate in the receiving society; on the other hand, Muslims are often connected to unskilled jobs, 'violent religion' and a trend to isolate themselves from the surrounding western societies (Aldridge, 2006).

It is in this light that I have carried a survey on the perception that Norwegians have of Latinos. As there are no texts on this topic, I had interviewed 100 individuals across Norway: 70 individuals living in large cities, 10 in islands and 20 in villages to further explore their opinions of Latin Americans. I have found out that most of the interviewees had similar attitudes, generally positive, towards Latin-American migrants throughout the whole country. The terms used in the majority of the cases were: passionate, sensual and warm-blooded, as well as exotic, dance lovers, expressive/communicative, and family oriented. Nonetheless, 1 every 15 persons (especially in main cities such as Oslo and Bergen) had also negative views of Latinos associating them to gangsterism, corruption, narcotrafficking, prostitution and classism. However, some of the interviewees said that they had not had much contact with Latinos. Thus, some of the answers were based on the ideas produced by social media and not because of a real interaction with Latin Americans. Nevertheless, the

results suggest that, in effect, external factors such as mass media, have a tremendous impact on the perception of migrants, and may also influence government's decision to toughen immigration policies to protect their nations.

Another important aspect to consider is the lack of focus from Norwegian media on South America (Borgen 2008), as confirmed also by a telephone interview with the social anthropologist Jon Schackt (personal communication, 9 February 2016). Indeed, in a study on the economic market of journalism Hamilton (1998), professor of Communication at Stanford University, declared that violence and sex are used in media because of their power to increase sales. According to Schackt (2016) and Borgen (2008), the major socio-political stability in Latin-America, after decades of fierce turmoil in the area, have pushed media to shift their attention to more turbulent regions of the planet, which are able to attract public interest.

Therefore, when Norwegians are asked to express their opinion on whether current immigration, in the specific family reunification, policies should be toughened, according to my study 65% of the people, regardless of where they live, think that policy makers should address policies against certain ethnic groups that do not represent Norwegian values (particularly Muslims). However, 85% of the interviewees declared that migrants from South American, Southeast Asia and developed, western countries not part of the EEA should be better included by Norwegian family reunification policies in the society as they share fundamental values with the local society. Indeed, the aforementioned groups of migrants are perceived as a way of complementing and enriching their indigenous partner, thus consequently the local community, with important 'exotic' values as temper, strong commitment toward the own family, expressivity.

Nevertheless, the percentage of respondents, which conceives marriages between immigrants of the same ethnic group as a lack of willingness of the foreigners to integrate themselves into the receiving society, is relatively high (58%). In this case locals assert that marriages can become a threat to the values of the receiving community as they tend to reproduce the socio-cultural norms of a certain society imposing 'foreign' values on local ones. Thus, creating a community inside another, the migrant family refuses to integrate itself in the host country creating tensions and misunderstandings with the locals (Malkki, 1992). In my interviews, I had the chance

to explore how Norwegians, in this last case, are supportive of the current regulations, which protect their society against external influences of a globalised world.

Conclusion to the chapter

In chapter 3 we have seen that family reunification policies contain different anthropological related topics such as power, gender, adaptation, exclusion, inclusion, nationalism, and migration, just to enumerate some. Thus, anthropological studies on this topic may contribute to our understanding of how family reunification policies are perceived by different social actors, including policy makers, mixed families, academics and general public. Also, they can offer a better insight of the effects that tough immigration policies may have on vulnerable persons, in particular women and children.

Moreover, this chapter showed how family reunification policies are tied to the discourse of national identity. Indeed, policy makers tend to toughen immigration policies to prevent their entrance of individuals from the so called “oppressive countries” as they are often perceived as a high risk to the hegemony of egalitarian societies. Hence, family reunification policies become a classificatory mechanism (Baba 2013) used to divide migrants into desired and undesired depending on their race, income, age and social background. Though, this categorization fluctuates over time according to the national interests and the international environment. For instance, at the beginning, the division of family migrants in Norway was based on the notions of the egalitarian “us” and the oppressive “they”, as portrayed by Hagelund (2003); later this categorization was perceived as a “racial project” seeking to prevent marriages of convenience and forced marriages (Myrdahl, 2010); nowadays, the same family immigration policies are described as economic categorizations, where migrants are separated into desired and undesired based on the sponsor’s income (Staver, 2014). Nevertheless, I argued that family reunification policies are both a racial project and an economic barrier, as poorer people tend to be darker skinned due to colonial discursive residue and various forms of discrimination and exclusion that follow from it.

Furthermore, this chapter discussed how tough immigration policies and high income requirements prevent Norwegians from lower economic strata to live together in Norway with their foreign spouses. According to the data collected during my fieldwork, this phenomenon is mainly presented among young women with part-time jobs, who are unable to demonstrate the income required for being a suitable sponsor. Hence, this scenario suggests that existing gender gaps and imaginaries of the “poor other”, influence the establishment of tough immigration policies to restrict the entrance of potential beneficiaries of social aid.

CHAPTER 4. MIXED FAMILIES AND THE REUNIFICATION PROCESS

My children are Norwegians, but they are also Latinos. We speak both languages Spanish and Norwegian, I also try to cook some typical food from my country and keep some of my traditions. Having a double nationality would be good for us, but it is not legally possible, thus we chose to be Norwegians. I am still dark-skinned, but since I changed my last name to my husband's and hold a Norwegian passport I feel somehow more accepted and welcomed. So that my children had to be Norwegians as well, even if our hearts belong to both countries.

Liliana (Personal conversation, January 18th, 2016)

Chapter 2 argued that family is shaped by the different ties created between human beings and the environment in which the family life is developed. It was also argued that mixed families enter into a negotiation process where the complete reproduction of local or foreign stereotypes may conduct to a temporal or definitive separation of the partners. Thus, most foreigners seek to assimilate the new system by learning the local language, establishing a new social network, incorporating themselves to the labour market and understanding the cultural differences. However, family reunification processes could be long and stressful. Indeed, as portrayed in chapter 3, to be accepted in Norway, family migrants and their sponsors must fulfil a series of conditions including age, income as well as proving the realness of the relationship through interviews and questionnaires. According to the data collected, the income requirement becomes the biggest obstacle for locals (especially young female) to live in Norway with their foreign spouses.

Furthermore, different opinions have been given on family reunification policies: while liberals and younger generations emphasize on the benefits of transnational migration, e.g. the possibility to master foreign languages, socio-cultural exchange, and diversification, among others (see e.g. Blom, 2015; O'Leary, 2010); the most conservative, argue that large influx of immigrants leads to the loss of cultural values and national identity (see e.g. Eriksen, 1993), house shortage, begging, organized

crime, racial tensions and strained welfare systems (see e.g. BBC, 2016; O’Leary, 2010).

In consequence, this chapter will analyse the effects that immigration policies, stereotypes and notions of the poor and oppressive other have on mixed families. Firstly, it will analyse the different motives that might have lead Latino-Norwegian families to choose Norway rather than a Latin America as a place of settlement. Secondly, it will be discussed how marriage might be perceived as one of the main requirements to have a residence permit approved on the basis of family reunification. Thirdly, in this chapter, I will explore the Latino place-making process in Norway and challenges faced by mixed families during the reunification course.

Mixed Families consisting of Norwegians and Latin Americans

According to Rodríguez-García (2008:245) *Métissage*, the creation of mixed families is frequently perceived as a symbol of social integration, as it “implies the absence of ethnic and racial prejudices”. Indeed, it is said that globalization, technology, free trade agreements and less restrictive mobility laws stimulate the transnational migration (Al-ali and Koser, 2001). Therefore, it aims to reduce the obstacles in the free movement of goods, services, technology and individuals. However, in reality one can observe that individuals from third world nations often face barriers to migrate to developed or wealthier nation (Block, 2012). According to Myrdhal (2010) this may happen because egalitarian states often seek to prevent the pollutedness of their nations by restricting the admission of citizens fleeing “oppressive” nations. Nevertheless, the data collected during my fieldwork suggest that wealthier nations seek to prevent the inflow of citizens from poorer nations³² who may possibly become a burden to the welfare system even if they are not considered to be part of an oppressive nation³³, confirming the idea that immigration policies are both racial and economic projects.

³² Dark-skinned individuals are often perceived as poor, uneducated, violent, marginal and inferior beings (see Stolcke 1993; Ystanes 2016)

³³ Norwegian interviewees’ portrayed Latin America as a warm and family oriented culture, but also poor, corrupted and disorganized society. The term “oppressive” was not mentioned during the interviews.

Latin Americans married to Norwegians are transnational migrants, who are able to live between two countries, speak at least two different languages and combine two cultures (see e.g. Vertovec 1999). In addition, most of them also maintain emotional, social, economic and physical ties with their homelands (King and Lulle, 2016; Anderson et al., 2010; Stolcke, 1995). For instance, most of my interviewees try to travel (at least once a year) to the so-called 'New Continent' to visit relatives and friends and *"to breathe the Latin American atmosphere"*. Also, the interaction between two countries allows mixed families to transfer and combine values, traditions, ideas, technology and economic resources from one nation to the other (Myrdahl 2010).

Nevertheless, by maintaining connections between two different places, transnational migrants and their families normally fall into the paradox of living in one country but having strong ties with another (Al-ali and Koser 2001). It means that family migrants constantly seek to adjust themselves to the Norwegian environment through the adoption of habits, traditions and practices (Vertovec 1999). However, they do not totally integrate themselves as they keep preserving some of the Latin American principles, values and traditions, thus creating an ambiguous atmosphere and having the sensation to belong neither from 'here', nor from 'there'.

Norway is a beautiful country but sometimes I feel strange being here. Often I miss my country, language, family, and friends; however, when I am in there, I miss the organization, cleanliness and safety-health and working conditions.

Daniela (Personal conversation, December, 6th 2015)

Thus, notwithstanding the "paradox of transnationalism", Latinos married to Norwegians argue that establishing a family in Norway have helped them to overcome the feelings of loneliness and developing a sense of belonging. However, family reunification processes imply a series of challenges for this group of individuals: a. Choose between two nations; b. Analyse the different options to immigrate to Norway, and chose the one most suited to the immigrant's nationality, family structure, and economy (e.g. family reunification as a spouse, cohabitant or fiancé; tourism or study); c. Complete the paperwork to apply for family reunification; d. Wait for the immigration authorities' decision either in Norway or in the country of origin; e. Adapt themselves to the new environment.

Choosing Norway as a Country of Residence

Migration, as discussed throughout this thesis, is a rigorous process, regulated by immigration policies seeking to protect the nation for corruption and social pollution (see e.g Eriksen 2010). In consequence, migration is often perceived as a long, demanding and stressful process, causing anxiousness and emotional instability among applicants and their families. Nevertheless, it is also said that reunification processes may be smoother when applicants are categorized as “desired” family migrants³⁴. For instance, Emma (from Colombia) and Adolfo (from Cuba), never had any inconvenience during the reunification process. Contrary, they affirmed to have received an extraordinary guidance that allowed them to fulfil and submit the right documentation to obtain the residence permit within a short period of time.

The process was not complicated at all. I think people should be aware of the procedure before applying for a residence permit, so they will not face any kind of obstacle... Norway is an excellent country which seeks to assure the well-being of its inhabitants and because of this they need to have strict policies. Otherwise, anyone would enter the country and the welfare state would be destroyed.

Emma J. (Personal conversation September 19th, 2015)

People at the embassy were very kind. They indicated me the different steps I needed to take to apply for a residence permit based on family reunification. Once in Norway, I was enrolled in Norwegian lessons and later NAV helped me to find a job... I also love nature and here I have the possibility to enjoy it every time: fjords, mountains and we can even appreciate the northern lights during the winter or the midnight sun in summer.

Adolfo L. (Personal conversation, December 27th, 2016)

³⁴ Foreign citizens whose spouses are able to demonstrate the income required to be a suitable sponsor.

I understand this positive perception as a reflection of a voluntary migration³⁵, where actors had the possibility to analyze the different advantages and disadvantages of establishing a family in Norway before moving there (see e.g. King, 2012). Lieber (1997) argues that “spontaneous migrants” are able to easily adjust themselves to the new environment because they do not have the necessity to focus on different matters at the same time (Lieber, 1997 in Colson, 2003:8). This idea proved to be valid during the participant observation carried during my fieldwork as voluntary immigrants, even before arriving in Norway, used to search for activities to do during in Bergen including dancing, participating in debates, taking language lessons or joining Facebook groups to enlarge their social network and learn about the culture.

However, in my analysis of family reunification processes in Norway, I could not ignore the fact that only a few of the Norwegians interviewed contemplated the idea of living in Latin America. According to them, the social inequalities, corruption, high unemployment rates, poor education systems and the precarious health services existing in Latin America, difficult the Norwegians’ adaptation to the Latino culture (see e.g. Bull et al., 2015). Additionally, as Latin America is often perceived as a poor region in need of help, Norwegians often play a dominant role by participating of conflict resolution processes, developing gender equality strategies and cooperating with the environment and conservation campaigns carried in Latin America (Bull et al. 2015: 248). For instance, Julia (25) often travels to Central America to participating of social campaigns to end violence against women.

I think lack of education and the rooted macho culture prevent some Latin American women, especially from lower strata, from being independent and react against violence. Thus the importance for us to participating of these type of campaigns.

Julia W. (Personal conversation, August 14th 2015)

This dominant position is, therefore, a clear example of the historical “race” hierarchies exposed in the previous chapter, where light-skinned people³⁶ symbolized

³⁵ Some of the causes of voluntary migration are: Better living conditions, access to health care, access to good education, better employment prospects and higher wages (BBC, 2016). Article available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/z8g334j/revision>

³⁶ Colonizers used blood purity as hierarchization guide (Ystanes 2016)

pureness, the elite and the power, while dark-skinned were seen as wild, polluted, poor and marginal who needed to be conquered to reach certain level of development (Stolcke, 1993).

Thus, based on the facts above, one could suppose that Latin Americans, prefer Norway rather than their own lands to establish a family. However, taking this idea for granted would be a mistake. Indeed, during my fieldwork, some of the Latinos interviewed constantly held nostalgic discourses of *“the home they had ‘over there’ where they grow up”*. According to them, Latin America offered them higher possibilities *“to be recognized”* and *“to have a status”*.

For instance, two of my informants said: *“In my country, I had my own business. Here, I have to clean the floors at the hospital, I do not have many friends and the only family I have is my wife”* and *“My father is a general in the Peruvian army. I had maids, drivers, and bodyguards. Now, I have to clean on my own and cook for my family”*.

There is consciousness about the internal conflicts and the economic, social and gender gaps in Latin America. However, these deficiencies do not mean that all immigrants from less developed countries are poor, desperate and uneducated (see e.g. King, 2012). Furthermore, contrasting ways of living in Norway and Latin America, tough immigration policies and difficulties to assimilate the new culture, make family immigrants wishing to return to their homelands or to spend longer periods abroad. Indeed, as Anderson and Broch-Due (2000) argued, poverty is contextual. Thus, what Norwegians could perceive as poor countries, Latinos would perceive as an invaluable patrimony, or a place where their quality of life is considerably higher than what they can expect to achieve in Norway. Even though it is true that Norway offers social security and economic stability to migrants, the cultural fences often generate insecurities and frustrations and delay family migrants' adaptation and integration processes.

Moreover, migration from Latin America to Norway could also indicate that global power inequalities between wealthy and poorer countries also work upon and influence mixed families decision-making. Hence, it is more or less expected that those who have a lower position in the global hierarchy, in terms of race, gender and the economic and political power of one's country, leave their own countries to assure their families well-being, even if they have to sacrifice their own life style and social status.

The Place-Making Process

People see places as locations with a valuable emotional meaning, made by cultural practices and social structures (Siim, 2013; Escobar, 2001). Thus, placemaking can be understood as the process where people transform spaces into places through life experiences, thoughts, and memories (Siim, 2013). As soon as this process is completed, the individual has a sense of belonging and, consequently, what was seen as “foreign” now is perceived as “own” (ibid). For instance, Luis Alberto, one of my informants who came to Norway in the late 70’s, affirms that the place-making process can, in many cases, be “long” and “difficult”. He argues that lack of language and reduced social knowledge usually become the biggest obstacle to understanding the Norwegian culture and develop a sense of belonging (see also Eriksen, 2010). Indeed, when Luis Alberto came to Bergen, many locals did not speak any language other than Norwegian (including the local dialects) and most of them were afraid to interact with foreigners.

“There was a scepticism towards migrants... I do not remember seeing many dark people by then. Many times, I was scared to walk alone in the streets Bergen. I was different from the rest, mainly because of my skin colour, and it made me an easy victim of verbal and physic abuse”.

Luis Alberto (Personal conversation, July 13th. 2015)

This situation made Luis Alberto enter into a state of depression, however, he decided to stay in Bergen and learn the local language. *“El idioma abre puertas (language opens doors) and through it, one can acquire a better knowledge of a determined culture and feel somehow accepted”*, he pointed out. However, from time to time he still perceives hostility towards immigrants especially when their work is related to customer service.

I am an immigrant and Norwegians will always see me as such, but I came here to establish a family and I work hard to maintain it. I do not to live off the State, I am an honest person and these unpleasant moments must not interfere with the life that my family and I have built along these years...

Norway has given me lots of good things and they are worth more than anything else, Luis Alberto added.

Thus, paraphrasing Escobar's (2001) argument, situating oneself in place is to have the capacity to integrate body, environment, and place, understanding the interconnection between the three of them. Or as my Latino informants say, "*to be in place is the capacity to feel comfortable living in a society different from your own*". Then, placemaking processes includes the knowledge of local laws and language, the creation of memories that link the self to the place, and understanding and participating of local traditions and cultural celebrations (e.g. National Parade on the 17th of May).

Among mixed families, I had observed three institutions that actively contribute to the placemaking process: the national government, church, and Latino groups. In this matter, the Norwegian government gives the immigrant a series of mechanisms to integrate. For instance, Latinos married with Norwegians have the right to 600 hours language tuition free of charge, divided as follows: 550 of Norwegian language training and 50 hours of social studies (UDI, 2016; Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (VOX), 2016). Also, public institutions such as NAV³⁷ provide different instruments to help immigrants' adaptation, e.g. work training, a tool designed to help people to acquire knowledge and experience needed to be an active part in the Norwegian labour market (NAV, 2016).

In fact, all the Latino informants who have taken Norwegian lessons agree with Luis Alberto's affirmation that knowing the local language have helped them to enlarge their social network, find a job and become economically independent. Others, like Teresa, have opted for the work training as a way of expanding the possibilities to find employment in Norway. Teresa is a Colombian professional in business administration who speaks Spanish fluently as well as Norwegian. During several months she sent applications to different open positions, however, she never obtained a positive reply. Frustrated and seeking for orientation, Teresa contacted NAV, where was introduced to a working training program. There, she was able to acquire some experience in the Norwegian labour market and today, six years later, Teresa is still working for the same company having a full time contract and a higher position. According to her, in effect, the Norwegian government has several tools to help foreigners to integrate. However,

³⁷ Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration - NAV

the majority of this information is only available in Norwegian. Hence the importance of learning the local language to understand the Norwegian legal framework, rights, and obligations that immigrants have while living in Norway.

Likewise, Teresa's information was corroborated in an interview with an agent from NAV. According to the public servant:

"The Norwegian state supports immigrants through a vast range of policies. However, lack of knowledge of the Norwegian language leads foreigners to either misuse or ignore the existing aids... Such limited knowledge may also cause foreigners to give wrong answers and obtain aids that not belong to them. Once the inconsistency is detected, the foreigner is obligated to return the received amount".

NAV Agent (personal conversation, August 2015)

The second contributor to the mixed families' place-making process is the church. According to La Terra (2012) immigrants' sense of belonging arises through participation and collaboration in traditional religious ceremonies. In other words, in an international context, the reproduction of spiritual rituals, ceremonies and beliefs give devotees the sensation of being accepted and integrated into the local community and its traditions (La Terra 2012). Indeed, the majority of my religious informants were devout Christians who argued that joining a church and participating of ceremonies give them the opportunity to reinforce their beliefs while expanding their social network. In addition, they argued that Christian communities work in the same way in Norway and Latin America, offer them the possibility to be easily integrated.

To mixed families, the church is the place where people gather together *"to hear, learn and follow the divine commands"*. It is also the symbol of a fraternal union and therefore, *"everyone is welcome notwithstanding social class, gender or race"*. Immigrants also affirmed to be calm and relieved during the religious encounters. *"God knows my heart and hears my prayers"*, they said. These affirmations, coincide with the anthropological assertion that religion helps to mitigate the disruption and stress caused by immigration (Warner, 1997 in Leonard et al., 2006). However, this theory has been challenged by immigration specialists who argue that religion and the consequent reproduction of religious traditions interfere with the immigrants' place-making process (Leonard et al., 2006). To them, immigrants often fail to integrate with

the local members by promoting and maintaining the national identity, or in this case the Latino identity, inside the church (ibid).

During the fieldwork I was invited to three ceremonies. In the course of these events I observed that Latinos often tried to sit next to other Latinos; the ceremonies were held in Norwegian but all of them offer the service of translation, giving the opportunity to English speakers to fully understand the contents; as soon as the services finished participants had the opportunity to share a meal together (in some places for free in others paying a small amount of money). During the meal, people interacted without making any difference between locals and foreigners. Contrary to the traditional assumption that Norwegians are “cold” and “individualists” (see e.g. Eriksen, 2010), I observed that Norwegians were the first to approach immigrants trying to establish small conversations about religion related topics. Also, Latinos and their Norwegian spouses argued that church has helped them to keep their families together regardless of the cultural differences. Thus, I will agree with Warner that religion becomes a tool of integration and I will add that it is perceived by mixed families as a symbol of the family union.

Further, the third influential actor in the mixed families’ place-making are the Latin American organizations in Norway. These groups normally seek to preserve and promote the Latin American cultural roots by organizing a series of events where immigrants and locals have the opportunity to enlarge their social networks, commemorate national days, speak Spanish, eat Latin American typical food, listen and dance folkloric and popular Latin music. Some of the events I had the opportunity to assist during the fieldwork were *La Yunza*³⁸; *La fiesta de los muertos*³⁹; Chilean, Brazilian, Peruvian and Colombian independence days, and many other exhibitions, presentations, films and seminars. According to the organisers, these events are used as a vehicle to connect Norwegians with the Latin American culture. Furthermore, some of the participants argued that by joining these events Latinos can mitigate the effects of immigration: “*sense of loneliness*”, “*loss of cultural identity*” and “*loss of economic and physical independence*”, as well as improving their social networks.

³⁸ A traditional carnival from Peru where people dance and sing around a tree full of presents to honour the *Pachamama* and to celebrate the happiness.

³⁹ A traditional celebration from Mexico that honours the transition from life to death with lights, flowers, food and music.

Indeed, they repeatedly said *“Being far from home, friends become a family, so I try to have as many friends as possible... I do not like to be lonely”*. And those thoughts are precisely the ones leading to the reproduction of the Latino idea of familism and extended family discussed in the second chapter. Some of the Norwegians interviewed during the events claimed that chances for a Norwegian *“to show up uninvited”* to these events are pretty low especially because they *“are a bit stuck on the socialising part”*. Thus, the main motives to participate in these activities were *“curiosity”, “Latin music”, “Latino beauty”* and *“understanding the Latino modus vevendi”*.

Latinos in Norway have a better acceptance that immigrants from Sudan, Syria, Turkey or Pakistan... I think the Norwegian interest in Latin America has something to do with their history ... It is also important to remark the influence of TV and how Latin America has always been a place that Norwegians would like to go for adventure... Latin America gives Norwegians a taste of something familiar, but also strange in a way, perhaps perceived as not so frightening.

Jostein B. (personal conversation, November 2015)

Notwithstanding the desire for social integration expressed by the organisers of these events, the creation of ethnic organizations and the corresponding reproduction of Latino traditions and beliefs, may be perceived as a threat to the immigrant's adaptation, place making process, and integration with the Norwegian society (see e.g. Eriksen, 2013). However, others allege that interactions between two or more different cultural groups give locals the opportunity to promulgate their own traditions and contribute to enriching the Norwegian cultural life (Blom, 2015). This phenomenon, according to Escobar (2001:143), inevitably occurs because *“people are not only “local”; we are all indissolubly linked to both local and extra-local places through what might be called networks”*.

Recapitulating, one could say that family migrants, and in this specific case, Latinos married to Norwegians seek to reconstruct and create new places for themselves and their families through constant interactions with locals (see e.g. Boehm 2012). This placemaking is accomplished by the linking local socio-cultural structures with the Latino identity, traditions, thoughts and culture (see e.g. Boehm 2012; Castro Neira 2005; Escobar 2001). In doing so, most of the Latino family migrants create and

maintain social, cultural (and sometimes political and economic) ties with the host and home countries (see also Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1995). For instance, some of the interviewees constantly send money to their home countries, while others teach Spanish or Latin American music or dances.

Nonetheless, the data collected during my fieldwork also shows that not all of the Latino family migrants are able to build strong bridges between the two cultures, neither they are able to adapt and integrate themselves into the receiver society. This situation may, in consequence, result in a temporal or permanent dissolution of the nuclear family. Phenomena that was particularly observed among mixed families consisting of a Norwegian female and a Latin American man. On the one hand, Latino men claimed that restrictive immigration policies, lack of job opportunities and female emancipation, help to situate male migrants on a disadvantageous and sometimes humiliating position. For instance, Pablo, a well-known Argentinian veterinarian in his early fifties, whose family lives in Norway while he resides in his home land, indicates that he *“cannot change mate, churrasco and soccer for salmon and potatoes”*, neither he desires to *“become a student, start learning Norwegian or searching for jobs”* when he already has established a solid carrier. Situation that also suggests that Latino family migrants’ adaptability is linked to ideas of masculinity, dominance and class privilege, and suggests that a Latin American upper class male social position is more or less irreconcilable with the situation of being in a context one does not yet master (see e.g. Englander; Yáñez; Barney 2012; Stølen 2002; Gutmann 1996).

Another example is Hernando a Brazilian engineer who said that *“Norwegian women tend to control everything around them, taking a more masculine role and limiting men’s freedom”*, situation that according to him may lead Latin men to establish new relationship. Female Norwegians, on the other hand, assert that it is true that immigration policies are restrictive and may delay the reunification process; however, family break-ups, according to them, are caused by the *“Latino ego and macho culture”* that prevent men from feeling equally accepted and totally integrated (see also Stølen 2002).

Norwegian female are not the type of women who stay at home cleaning and looking after their children while waiting for their husbands to bring

money. We are independent and some men cannot accept it, thus they decide to move away.

Julia W. (Personal conversation August 14th 2015)

However, as pointed out in chapter 2, one cannot ignore that the majority of Latino men adapt just fine to life with a Norwegian woman and that the majority of couples divide the work between themselves without conflict. Thus, this particular problem of female emancipation versus “Latino ego and macho culture”, or migrants who are otherwise unable to adapt, is only relevant in some cases.

Power: The Most Decisive Tool in Family Immigration Processes

Family reunification policies are synonymous with authority, supremacy, and power. Perhaps they constitute the most powerful mechanisms of control used by governments to prevent the entrance of ‘undesired’ family migrants (see e.g. Staver, 2014; Block 2012; Eriksen, 2010). Family reunification policies are unidirectional and restrictive rules (Baba 2013) based on the idea of the different, powerless and voiceless “other” (Rich, Epps and Lamphear 2016:1). Therefore, family reunification policies limit individuals’ opinions and actions (Masaki, 2007) and categorize individuals according to their gender, role, status, nationality, and race (see e.g. Shore, Cris; Wright 1997).

For instance, looking at the Norwegian immigration policies, one can observe that family members of an EU-EEA citizen have privileged positions compared with one of the family members of a Norwegian citizen (see also Eggebø 2012b). The first group can apply for a residence card for a family member of an EU-EEA citizen, while the second group must apply to family reunification. Also, in the case of applications for residence cards the EU-EEA sponsor must be registered in Norway as an EU-EEA citizen, be self-employed, have sufficient funds, be an employee or student and have the capacity to maintain his/her partner⁴⁰. However, he/she does not need to

⁴⁰ Residence card for family members of EU-EEA nationals. UDI 2016. Available at: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/family-immigration/residence-card-for-family-members-of-eueea-nationals-/?f=ita&c=col#link-1146>

demonstrate a minimum income to reunify with their families. While Norwegian sponsors, on the other hand, have to demonstrate the realness of their relationship and a minimum income of NOK 305 200 per year pre-tax, among other requirements (UDI 2016) – a situation known as reverse discrimination. Hence, EU-EEA citizens residing in Norway have more possibilities than Norwegians nationals to reunite with their family members (see e.g. Block 2012; Eggebø 2012b; Staver 2013b).

Moreover, the data collected shows that reverse migration generates contested positions and emotional conflicts among Norwegian citizens married to a foreign citizen. On the one hand, they disagree with the growing number of immigrants from EU-EEA countries and suggest to toughen immigration policies to control their entrance. On the other hand, they claim that immigration policies are restrictive and elitist and may separate Norwegians from their foreign spouses (see e.g. Staver 2013). Additionally, this kind of situation generates a sense of impotence and powerlessness among the national citizens who cannot freely establish a family or reunite with their foreign spouses. This feeling is therefore increased when national citizens face difficulties to fulfil the tough immigration requirements (especially the income requirement) needed to bring their beloved to Norway (see also Staver 2013b).

For instance, when I spoke with my interviewees about the Norwegian family reunification policies, many of them claimed that national citizens⁴¹ should be able to reunite with their international partners, independently of their income. They also insisted that love should be a “*thermometer*” in family reunification cases and consequently, authorities should not only focus on the sponsor’ economic situation but on the couple’s feelings. Moreover, as will be further discussed, when immigration policies are strengthened and family members see limited possibilities to be together, they would have a tendency to seek for new opportunities to reunite (see e.g. King and Lulle 2016) even if they have to face a situation of irregularity (see e.g. DeGenova 2002). Or perhaps, they also decide to move to another European country to enjoy the benefits of being a citizen of the Union and to have better chances to live together with their loved ones (Block 2012; Staver 2013b).

⁴¹ Referring to Norwegians without immigrant background

Family Immigration Policies and the Image of the Poor Other

Family reunification policies are also linked to the discourse of the powerful “we” and powerless “they” (Cooper 2005; Hagelund 2003). Indeed, it appears to be a positive correlation between the degree of difficulty to obtain a residence permit and the image of the applicant’s country of origin (Eggebø 2012b). Indeed, immigration officers pay particular attention to applications coming from countries with a propensity to the marriage of convenience e.g. a young Turkish man married with an older Norwegian woman (Pöyry 2010; Eggebø 2012b; UDI 2012).

“Quite often, these marriages appear to be what is considered as a “one-way marriage of convenience”, meaning that the sponsor believes that the relationship with this younger man is genuine, while the applicant uses the marriage as an opportunity to obtain a residence permit in Norway”.⁴²

Additionally, immigration authorities also focus on single cases which may fall into the frame of a false marriage (see also Eggebø 2012). The story of Maria could be a perfect example of this situation: Maria is a young woman from Mexico married to an older man from Bergen. He has an administrative position, high income and constantly travels within Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Also, he has a son and a daughter from a previous relationship and soon will become a grandfather. Maria and her partner met through a dating site and after few months of chats, he decided to “*travel to Mexico to establish a face-to-face contact*” with Maria. After this visit, the couple decided to get married and establish a family in Norway:

I was fascinated! He was tall, had blue eyes and a beautiful smile. He acted like a real gentleman. I could not believe he was there [...] I was happy, but our families were not. They did not understand us, our families did not want to hear anything regarding our wedding: “You are crazy, how could you think of get married to such an old man, and what would our family and friends say?” my father repeatedly said. The reaction of his family was

⁴² Misuse of the Right to Family Reunification: marriages of convenience and false declarations of parenthood Report to the European Migration Network from the Norwegian Contact Point, April 2012; Available at: https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/forskning-fou_i/arbeid-og-opphold/misuse-of-the-right-to-family-reunification.pdf

even worse... but anyway he loved me and I loved him, why should we care about the age difference and other's opinions?

Maria B (Personal conversation, Augustus 5th 2015)

Maria moved to Norway few days after the wedding. Once in Norway, the couple gathered the required documentation to apply for family reunification. During the process, her husband was called for an interview to have a better understanding of the information previously provided. According to Maria, the immigration officer probably saw her as a young woman from Latin America, whose motivation to marry an older Norwegian man was to obtain a residence permit that allows her to live in Norway.

The officer was kind of rude with my husband; he possibly thought that I was using him to live in Norway. But it was not like that and our son is the most valid proof of our love (Maria got pregnant when her residence permit was being processed). They judged us because I am Latina and young. But the only reason for me to leave my country, my people, and my own life was love, said, Maria.

However, looking at the regulations, one can see that couples may be called for an interview when the immigration authorities perceive something suspicious or have doubts regarding the realness of a relationship. In doing so, the authorities seek to take objective decisions and prevent any false accusation of the marriage of convenience (Eggebø, 2012). It was precisely what happened in Maria's process. After interviewing her husband, the immigration officer provided the couple with a positive decision, giving Maria the possibility to live in Norway with her husband and son.

Nevertheless, one cannot deny that during the legal process the young woman and her husband lived a period of uncertainty. They did not know if Maria would obtain the residence permit or what to do if she needed to go back to Mexico. The couple was powerless and their future was on the immigration officer's hands. The argument of love had little or no influence on the final decision, but Maria's pregnancy resulted as a decisive "tool" to change the perspective of this case. Thus, pregnancy could be seen as a consolidation of love and a feasible proof of real marriages. But what would happen if Maria's pregnancy comes after the reunification process? Does there really exist a freedom to choose a partner independently of age, cultural and economic differences? Do immigration policies restrict people's decision-making? If Maria would

have been European, would the immigration authorities also perceive a possible marriage of convenience?

In family reunification processes, the interviews conducted by immigration authorities may be considered as a practical mechanism to determine the realness of a relationship (see e.g. Eggebø 2012). Upon hearing the applicant and/or the sponsor, the authorities have the possibility to obtain a better picture of the family ties between the applicant and sponsor. Furthermore, in addition to the interviews, immigration authorities will also analyse the sponsor's economic possibilities to cover the applicant's expenses, cultural differences and affinities between the partners, time spent together before the marriage, language, knowledge of each other, age difference and previous relationships (UDI, 2012). These instruments could be seen as "*more practical facts*" to help immigration officers to make more objective decisions regarding family immigration residence permits (Eggebø, personal conversation March 1st, 2016).

Nevertheless, the mechanisms used by authorities to determine the realness of relationships to approve a residence permit is highly contested. Indeed, many of my informants claimed that as love cannot be measured, it is correct for immigration officers to analyse other facts including age difference, language, length of the relationship and cultural differences. Others, however, suggested that love should be the key factor to allow or deny the entrance of family migrants rather than sponsor's income. Hence, while some consider irrelevant the facts that Eggebø described as "practical"⁴³ others may see them as decisive mechanisms to determine the realness of a relationship. Thus, the relevance of these facts would also be closely related to the imaginaries of the poor other. For instance, as indicated by Myrdahl (2010:108), the idea that the inhabitants of poorer countries want to travel to Norway to improve their living conditions has been spreaded in the Norwegian public sphere. From this point of view, immigrants would be able to use any mechanism to have a residence permit approved (including marriages of convenience).

Nonetheless, my findings indicate that is partially true that citizens from poorer nations migrate to a more developed country in order to have a better life. Indeed, some of my informants affirmed that by moving to Norway they had sacrificed their own socio-economic status, independence and life style to be next to their love ones.

⁴³ Age and cultural differences, language, status and income.

Additionally, as indicated in the previous chapters, most of my informants from Latin America have already obtained a 5 year bachelor's degree and are able to speak two or more languages; however, a considerable part of them have not been able to find a job in their area of expertise, so they are currently working at kindergartens, cleaning companies or nursing homes. Likewise, some of them have also found it difficult to enlarge their social networks and learn to speak the local language. These factors make them feel “*out of place*”, “*dependent*” and “*inferior*” (see also Eriksen 2013). In consequence, it is not totally true that by moving to Norway family migrants from poorer countries improve their living conditions.

Moreover, receiver countries force immigrants in many ways to be like locals (see e.g. Eriksen, 2010). Immigrants need to learn the new culture, adapt to the local traditions, speak the local language and eat the local food to be considered as ‘integrated’ (Bonjour and Kraler 2014). However, notwithstanding the efforts that immigrants do to adapt themselves, the locals in most cases, keep seeing them as foreigners (Eriksen 2010). In consequence, many immigrants tend to ghettoize to keep a sense of acceptance. For instance, one of my informants said “*I have Norwegian friends, but sometimes I feel strange when I am with them... It is like I cannot be myself*”. What would you need to be yourself? I asked. “*Confianza*” she replied.

If I want to laugh I have to control my tone of voice; if they ask me to meet up at 3:00 p.m., I cannot be there by 3:15; if I want to make a joke they might not find it humorous. I also feel strange giving my children too many gifts during Christmas. In my country, I would give them only one or two but meaningful... I still feel observed, sometimes I feel like no matter what I do I would always be a stranger here.

Marcela P. (Personal conversation, August 03rd 2016)

Family Reunification, Power and Language

In chapter 3 family reunification policies were portrayed as codified with a specific cultural meaning defined by a particular context (Baba 2013; Shore 2012; Wedel et al. 2005). It means that while certain policies might have a profound meaning for a

determined society, the same policies would appear unnecessary and meaningless to other societies. Therefore, I agree with Shore's argument that language, context, and interpretation are decisive tools to determine whether policies as well as the policies' intentions have been successful or not (see Shore 2012). Moreover, family immigration policies does not only provide social guidance to individuals, they also classify them as desired or undesired, local and foreigner, skilled and non-skilled, single and married, and so on (Shore, Cris; Wright 1997; Shore 2012; Staver Anne 2014). Thus, policies are with no doubt a powerful mechanism of control (Eriksen 2013) used by governments to create a social imaginary of what is correct, accepted or desired to a determined community (Baba 2013).

Therefore, knowledge of the local language is essential for family migrants to understand and adapt to the local norms. By doing so, migrants will be able to comprehend their rights and obligations and follow the established cultural codes. Thus, language also gives foreigners the opportunity to enlarge their social networks and increase the possibilities to find a employment or to study (Guzi et al. 2014). Indeed, as indicated by Gullestad (2004), individuals are powerful when they are able to have control over their own actions, words and lives. Thus, one can suggest that language can be seen by family migrants as a mechanism to prevent abuses, exploitations, mistreatments, and manipulations.

“Norwegian is essential to finding a job and communicating with your colleagues. You may find a job but if you do not understand what people say around you, then you feel somehow discriminated and unhappy”; “when you have a child in Norway, you would like to understand what he or she tries to communicate to comprehend their necessities and desires”; “by speaking Norwegian I am able to understand what is happening around me”.

Susana P. (Personal conversation, December 1st 2015)

Additionally, a limited knowledge of the local language may cause tensions between locals and newcomers (Colson, 2003). These tensions are intensified especially in situations where none of the parts is able to understand the other's needs. For instance, some of the interviewees claimed to feel inferior, unprotected and exposed due to their lack of knowledge.

Many times I have used words that make no sense in Norwegian. Other times I changed the meaning of the sentence because of my pronunciation. I had even had some misunderstandings and needed my wife to intervene for me. It was embarrassing, but I am learning, I guess we all have those moments.

Fernando (Personal conversation, July 07th 2015)

In addition, the lack of language generates socioeconomic dependency. My findings show that Latinos who did not speak Norwegian or English were afraid to mobilize on their own. They did not have the opportunity to find a job or join any Norwegian University. This situation, therefore, places some family migrants in a powerless position where thoughts, ideas and feelings need to be communicated through a third person. Thus, to prevent possible tensions and misunderstandings between locals and family migrants and to reduce the degree of dependency, the Norwegian government offers 550 hours of Norwegian language training and 50 hours of social studies free of charge to migrants married to Norwegians (UDI, 2016; VOX, 2016). This training helps immigrants to understand the Norwegian society, its way of living, customs, traditions, and values. At the same time, family migrants have the possibility to improve their language knowledge and to interact with other new foreigners.

Conclusion to the chapter

Chapter 4 focused on the family reunification process carried out by mixed families consisting of Norwegians and Latin Americans settled in Norway. It was discussed how family reunification policies are tied to discourses of national identity and the perception of “the poor other”. Indeed, immigrants are frequently seen as individuals from less favoured places who migrate to more developed areas looking for a better quality of life. This perception also influences policy makers’ decision to toughen immigration policies seeking to prevent misuses and abuses on the Norwegian welfare system, as well as preventing the corruption of the nation. However, as this thesis illustrates, not all individuals from third world nations are poor, deprived and uneducated. Thus, assuming that all family migrants come to Norway seeking to improve their lifestyle

would me a mistake. Indeed, some of the interviewees argued that moving to Norway signifies lost privileges, reputation and status, and became invisible aliens.

Even so, these migrants are often labelled “undesired” by the receiving nation. They are made to go through longer and more demanding reunification processes, including harsh interviews, to eliminate any suspicion of a marriage of convenience. Desired migrants, on the other hand, have smoother processes and can reunify with their Norwegian spouses within a shorter period of time. Furthermore, the income requirement was found to be the most difficult to overcome by those seeking family reunification in Norway. Indeed, this requirement often restricts Norwegians from the lower strata to live together with their foreign spouses in Norway. Also, the age difference and the economic gap between partners emerged as a possible indications of marriage of convenience. Against this background, my informants argued that family reunification processes should focus on love rather than other aspects, especially the income requirement, as sponsors may have economic breakdowns and love is supposed to be the root of the family.

Furthermore, it was shown that the degree of acceptance the migrant finds in the receiving community has a tremendous influence on his/her integration practices. For instance, desired migrants appear to have a faster adaptation to the new environment. They often participate in socio-cultural activities to expand their social network, while learning the local language, customs and traditions. Also, they sign up for job fairs, register for lessons or act as volunteers for international institutions. Undesired family migrants, on the other side, often tend to develop a sense of inferiority and segregating themselves. Because of this, some of them find it difficult to understand the Norwegian way of living. In addition, the data collected reveals the importance of language in family reunification processes. On the one hand, it helps to create an understanding of what is considered correct, accepted or desired in the receiving society. On the other hand, it becomes the most practical mechanism to understand the local codes, rights and obligations. Also, it allows family migrants to cultivate a sense of belonging, interacting with a higher number of locals, increasing the opportunities to study or finding a job.

CHAPTER 5. FAMILY REUNIFICATION POLICIES AND THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN EUROPE

Family reunification policies are nothing different from a written discourse of power. They are clearly established to restrict the movement of people from determined areas (e.g. regions with internal conflicts). In my case, I do not need any visa to stay in Europe up to three months. However, when it comes to family reunification, I cannot stay with my family as my wife is sick and receives social aid from NAV.

Cristobal (Personal conversation, December 14th 2015)

Chapter 2 discussed the influence of globalization on the creation and reproduction of new types of family, including same-sex families, mixed families, adoptive families, among others. Also, it was said that having a universal definition of family would be a mistake as the notion of family varies according to the environment in which the individual is situated. Furthermore, it was discussed how perceptions of the family may influence the creation of restrictive immigration policies seeking to restrict the entrance of family migrants from nations considered oppressive in the receiving society.

Chapter 3 examined the importance of anthropological studies on family reunification policies. Also, it analysed the evolution of this set of policies, finding out that while goods and services easily shift from one place to another, the movement of people is still restricted by immigration policies that have been toughened with time. Some of the new requirements include a minimum income and increment the applicant's minimum age, as well as a series of documentation to prove the realness of the relationship.

Chapter 4 described the challenges faced by mixed families during the reunification process. It also showed that family reunification policies are the result of ideas of the poor and dangerous "other" whose presence may pollute egalitarian and relatively homogenous societies such as Norway. Also, the chapter described the importance of knowing the local language to understand and follow socio-cultural codes and facilitate immigrants' adaptation process.

The current chapter will review the results obtained by the political framework established to protect the socio-cultural cohesion in the Norwegian society. Furthermore, it analyses the effects of the regulations in place to manage family migration. That is, does the law contribute to both integrating the migrant spouse into the receiving society and allowing Norwegian citizens to freely choose their partner among the world's population?

Carens (2003) argues that conventionally, states are perceived as having the right to decide who to accept within their territorial borders based on quantity and quality of the immigrants. However, according to the author, it does not mean that the established immigration policies cannot be disputed according to moral principles. Indeed, it was previously shown in this dissertation that until the 1980s the International Labour Organisation (ILO) had been recommending societies to facilitate family reunification (Strik et al., 2013). The principle was mainly rooted on economic (rather than the moral) basis because it would improve the well-being of migrants and encourage a better integration in the receiving society. Thus, improving the skilled immigrants' quality of life by bringing in their spouses was considered to be a key factor to increase their productivity and reduce social "unpredictability" (Lucassen, 2005). On this basis, as we have previously seen in chapter 3 many countries have granted their nationality to "foreign wives of male citizens" (Bonjour and Kraler, 2015:3). Therefore, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the European Union followed ILO suggestions establishing the European Directive on Family Reunification (Directive 2003/86/EC) (ibid).

At a later stage, however, due to an increasing pressure on national governments to tackle migration flows there has been a progressive reshaping of the policies to reduce the amount of less qualified migrants (Kofman et al., 2011). The increasing flow of migrants in the past two decades put a strain on Western societies. Local communities often perceive aliens as a social threat, which endangers their national security and their modern, emancipated and egalitarian values by bringing in violence and "deviant norms and practices" (Bonjour and Kraler, 2015:6; Strik et al., 2013). Also, the unemployed, students and non-skilled workers are often placed in the category of "undesired" migrants; people that, according to the policymakers and the general view of the receiving society, often represent a burden for the national economy and a threat to local homogeneity and social cohesion (Bonjour and Kraler 2015).

Furthermore, by setting tougher regulations such as narrowing the age gap between partners and increasing the income and integration requirements, the government aims to protect women from forced marriages and cut down the number of marriages of convenience (ibid). Indeed, the aforementioned requirements place the local sponsor in a tougher position, testing in this way his or her true commitments to the partner. The other side of the coin, however, finds the migrant spouse in a continuous reliance on its sponsor emulating old patriarchal societies, which the laws try to distance (Eggebo 2012; Stølen 2002).

This study proves that the family immigration policy framework obtains contrasting results. From one side, it achieves to restrain the arrival of 'undesired' migrants who are considered a burden on the receiving society and preserves the national homogeneity and social cohesion. Contrastingly, these policies also reduce Norwegians without immigrant background's freedom of choice. In consequence, the national citizens have to overcome several barriers to establish a family with a foreign citizen; what, at the same time hinders the concept of "melting pot" (Gordon, 1964).

Finally, current family reunification policies should be considered in a broader context of tightening of borders in countries with better socio-economic and political conditions. Nevertheless, this fact is opposing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stated that the family represents the fundamental element of every society and must be protected at national and international levels [United Nations (UN), 1948]. However, it can be seen that the recent inflow of migrants, especially asylum seekers and refugees, has increased somehow the strain on the Norwegian society. It, therefore, leads the national government to establish stricter immigration policies aimed at reducing the number of applications for family reunification, particularly coming from sponsors with immigrant background, especially individuals from Syria, Irak, and other areas from the Middle East and Africa (Myrdhal, 2010; Hagelund, 2003). However, the government's desire to limit the right to family reunification is being denounced as in conflict with Norway's commitment to international human rights conventions (AFP, 2016; newsinenglish.no, 2015)

"It is very serious that politicians are using punitive measures that would make life more difficult for a number of asylum seekers who are entitled to

protection," told Andreas Furuseth, from the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers to AP news agency.⁴⁴

(Nackstrand, 2016)

Marriages of convenience

The notion of marriage of convenience is based on the hypothesis that false marriages end up in divorce after the permanent residence permit is granted (Pöyry, 2010:3). In Norway, during 2009, after following a strict procedure, immigration officers rejected 2% of the total of the applications for family reunification based on a strong suspicions of the realness of those marriages (ibid). Regardless the low number of rejections, compared to other European countries, the national immigration authorities are still concerned about the possibility of such cases (Eggebø, 2012). Therefore, authorities toughen policies and follow a check list to detect any possible case of marriage of convenience (ibid). In doing so, immigrants and sponsors must demonstrate, through documents and interviews, the “realness”, of their intimate relationship (Staver, 2014; Eggebø, 2012). Consequently family reunification processes become stressful and stretch out over a long period, especially when applicants and/or sponsors are called for an interview. Indeed, as portrayed by Peter Ø., family migrants have to be mentally prepared to answer very sensitive questions.

My wife and I were taken into two different rooms. That moment was totally stressful! They (referring to the immigration authorities) did not want to miss a single thing. The officer asked for a detailed description of the relationship with my wife: how we met each other and under which circumstances; he also wanted to know about the wedding day: when and how we had celebrated it, the amount of money spent for the wedding arrangements, who had carried with the expenses, the number of guests and the type of gifts received from them; very specific details on the partner’s core family (age, full names, and jobs of all members); frequency in our premarital encounters... I also remember they asked me: “what would

⁴⁴ Read more: <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201512301032516821-norway-refugee-crisis-tough-visa-asylum-policy/>

you do if your wife's residence permit is rejected?" ... They even wanted to know if I would give them the authorization to run a DNA test on my unborn daughter. I found it rude and irreverent, I think it violates not just the couple's privacy, but also that of the baby... I had to authorize the test, as I was scared they could deny my wife's residence permit if I rejected it; but I was annoyed and disappointed... They could ask me to do anything but why should they put into question my daughter's identity, what if I would have adopted her, she would still be my baby.

Peter Ø. (personal conversation, November 2015)

Peter's story triggered a fundamental question for me regarding this type of interviews: is there any limit between the private and the public in cases of family reunification? On the one hand, some international news agencies bring out recent scandals of privacy violation committed by governments, at the expenses of citizens and other nations, highlighting the sensitivity of handling personal data (Masco, 2014). On the other hand, the recent terrorist attacks across Western Europe, the influx of undocumented migrants and false marriages between EU citizens and foreign nationals have been used by institutions as reasons for justifying tighter controls and civilians' privacy violation (ibid). However, as argued by Masco (2014), this breach is justified by governments as an effective way to prevent security threats; albeit, the real meaning behind it may be related to maintaining tougher controls on citizens and avoid the diffusion of values that may run against common beliefs in western societies (Staver, 2014; Baba, 2013).

Moreover, the categorization of family migrants is also done according to the applicants' country of origin. It means that nationals from countries with a higher propensity to marriages of convenience are the commonly subjects of extreme paper-based and physical controls run by immigration officers (Eggebø, 2012). In these cases, applicants and sponsors must provide a complete series of documentations aimed to clarify the veracity of the partnership (Pöyry, 2010). Additionally, the local authorities have a list of countries reporting the likelihood ratio of false certifications, forced marriages, and marriages of convenience that may help to detect suspicious cases and reduce the number of applications coming from these areas (Eggebø, 2012). Also, when immigrants search for a residence permit renewal, they may be

visited by an immigration officer who seeks to verify the realness of the relationship. If that is the case, the couple could be asked to show as much evidence as possible to prove that they live together (ibid).

Marriage: a Requirement to Family Reunification

In *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (1951), marriage was defined as “the union of man and woman such that the children born from the woman are recognised as legitimate by the parents” (Bell, 1997:237). In other words, the institution of marriage, in terms of functionality, is concerned with the legitimization of heterosexual unions so that paternity is socially, morally and legally established, making inheritance possible (Borneman, 1996:220). However, this definition of marriage is becoming less popular (Bell, 1997). Indeed, as discussed in chapter 2, in the current times people do not need to be heterosexual to get married, neither they need to be married to have their children considered “legitimate” or their family socially, morally and legally recognised. For instance, in Norway cohabitants registered living at the same address are automatically given joint parental responsibility⁴⁵.

Furthermore, in industrial societies marriage is not only linked to “sexual access rights”, it is also identified to the property and wealth arrangements that define the sharing of assets in case of divorce (Bell, 1997:241). Nevertheless, according to Michael Burton, giving a universal definition of marriage is a mistake (Bell, 1997:245). Burton claims that in order to have a general definition of marriage one should carry diverse cross-cultural studies of the role of marriage as a rite of passage, affiliation to children, sexual access, residence, food sharing and division of labour to identify the patterns found in all societies (ibid). Indeed, this idea has been an influential factor for most anthropologists (including myself) to make “marriage secondary or derivative of

⁴⁵ “Parental responsibility is the obligation and right parents have to decide in personal matters for the child. The person/persons with parental responsibility are also the child's guardian” (Skatteetaten, 2016). Information available at:

<http://www.skatteetaten.no/en/Person/National-Registry/Birth-and-name-selection/Children-born-in-Norway/Paternity-and-parental-responsibility/>

other units of analysis such as kinship, gender, power, and political economy” (Borneman, 1996:216).

To situate marriage in the context of family immigration one must understand globalization as the connection between nations through technology, business, mass media and mobilizations (Kottak, 2011). This interconnectivity allows people from distant places to exchange ideas, customs, traditions, rituals and beliefs (Eriksen, 2013). Additionally, this linkage also generates new multicultural partnerships leading to the formation of mixed families (e.g. Latino-Norwegian families). These unions are not always celebrated through wedding ceremonies, as couples do not need to marry to be recognized as a family (Howell, 2009; Melhuus, 2009; Grillo, 2008). However, one cannot ignore that marriages are still commonly celebrated around the world (Grillo, 2008) and they give partners the opportunity to exchange ideas, rituals, traditions, thoughts and properties. It also legitimates social and economic benefits and obligations that cannot be fully recognized otherwise (Bell, 1997; Borneman, 1996).

Thereafter, I will discuss how the institution of marriage has been used in processes of family reunification in Norway. I will also show the differential treatment received by married couples and those who are not. For instance, cohabitants wishing to be reunified in Norway must prove to have lived together for at least 2 years before submitting the application (UDI, 2016); married couples, on the other side, do not need to demonstrate a specific period of cohabitation. Hence, this scenario portrays marriage as an effective tool to family reunification, allowing partners to be together within a shorter period of time. This pushes foreign-norwegian couples (including Latino-Norwegian couples) to choose marriage as the form of partnership. In turn, it enforces the traditional model on them, which is ironic considering all the concern with the traditional values of certain immigrant groups.

Furthermore, in western societies individuals have the right to freely choose their partners. However, to get married, the couple must follow a series of moral, social and cultural rules. In Norway, for example, the requirements, rights, and obligations acquired by partners through marriage are contained in The Norwegian Marriage Act. It states that partners' minimum age to get married is 16 years old, the spouses have to be chosen voluntarily and both partners must consent to the matrimony. This Act also forbids the celebration of weddings when a previous relationship has not been

legally dissolved, as well as it forbids marriages between relatives. Additionally, it describes the legal capacity to marry, dissolution, right to dispose of property and duty to support the family, among others⁴⁶.

In the Norwegian society as well as in Latin America, 'real' marriages are perceived as the union of two people who love each other and seek to become a family (Eggebø, 2012; Pöyry, 2010). However, during my fieldwork I had observed that in addition to celebrating their love, some Latino-Norwegian couples got married to speed up the reunification process. Also, through marriage they seek to enjoy a series of legal and economic benefits, including joint parenting benefits, sick leave to take care of a partner or child, and the right of immigration and residency for partners from non-European countries (see also NAV, 2016).

For instance, Eirik (34) and Pilar (26), decided to get married after analysing the different options for Pilar to live in Norway with her partner:

We love each other but getting married was not our priority. However, we did it to stay together, said Pilar. Her husband, Eirik, added: cohabitants need to have lived together for at least two years or expect a baby; we did not fall into those categories... what else could we do? ... If we had chosen to apply for a fiancé visa then we would have needed to get married within 6 months, then there was no reason to wait, we just did it! ... As you can see we are happy together and if I could to go back in time, I would take the same decision to protect our relationship.

Pilar and Eirik M. (personal conversation, October 30th, 2015)

In a similar way, other four couples admitted having gotten married because of the "advantages" that a legal marriage would give them during the family reunification process. Thus, after a deep analysis of these five cases, I found various coincidences: a. all the applicants got the residence permit approved; b. the couples were constituted by a Latin American woman and a Norwegian man; c. none of the couples had a considerable age difference; d. The Norwegian partners have a full-time job and their own house; e. None of the Latin American partners have been previously married; f.

⁴⁶ The Norwegian Marriage Act is available at: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/the-marriage-act/id448401/>

All of the applicants have at least a five year Bachelor degree. Nonetheless, looking at these six points many questions have emerged: could marriage be seen as a one of convenience in these cases? Or could one argue that marriages are in fact a requirement to family reunification? Is marriage genuineness determined by sponsors' income? Why are none of the sponsors in these cases female? What happens when couple's age difference is considered substantial (more than ten years age difference)? How could family reunification be affected by the existence of previous marriages? Do applicants with a strong academic background have more possibilities to have a residence permit approved? Could one say that marriage is, in fact, the most efficient mechanism to family reunification?

The list of questions is extensive. However, to analyse the data collected during my fieldwork I needed to contemplate these interrogatives. In cases of family immigration, judging the veracity of a marriage is perhaps one of the most important responsibilities that immigration officers have. However, human objectivity can be influenced by imaginaries and preconceptions, leading to unfair decisions. Therefore, to be as objective as possible, authorities follow a list of actions to determine the authenticity of the relationship (UDI, 2016; Eggebø, 2012). This procedure seems to be based on a closer analysis of the links between applicants and sponsors, where the couple's narratives are meticulously analysed to determine if they are telling a coherent story or not (Eggebø, 2012). Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 4, to determine the genuineness of a relationship, immigration officers do not focus on partners' feelings towards each other, they rather focus on 'more practical matters' such as age difference between the couple, how long they have known each other before getting married, and cultural similarities, among others (UDI, 2016; Eggebø, 2012; Pöyry, 2010), which according to Eggebø (personal conversation 1st March 2016) helps immigration authorities to carry more objective processes. These matters also contribute to finding a balance between immigration laws and rights to family formation and establishment (Pöyry, 2010). However, if marriage is understood in western societies as the consolidation of love, why are partners' feelings towards each other not considered to be essential to family reunification processes? Presumably, feelings are not taken into consideration because they cannot be measured. Undeniably legislation should be based on quantifiable elements, hence how can something indefinite as love or feelings be taken into consideration when bureaucratically regulating relationships? Thus, the real

essence of a true relationship gets discarded by the law as being unmeasurable leading to the fundamental question of how to define the realness of a relationship. This, in turn, increases the concerns among politicians and certain sectors of the population due to the hindrances in evaluating and establishing the undesirability of an immigrant.

Irregularity: A Result of Tough Immigration Policies

Family reunification is a manifestation of the universal right to have a family⁴⁷ and constitutes a crucial instrument to immigrant's integration to the receiver society (La Piedra Alcamí, 2015). However, to many foreign citizens wishing to migrate and reunite with their Norwegian spouses, the right to have a family is more likely to be a challenging mission (ibid). Indeed, family migrants have to demonstrate the 'realness' of their relationship and meet the economic requirements stipulated by law to qualify for reunification with a Norwegian national citizen (UDI, 2016). Indeed, it is not strange to see newspaper articles about the national interest in further restricting immigration policies as well as articles narrating the challenges faced by immigrants to live with their family members in Norway (Berglund, 2015; Gianelli, 2015; Radio Latin-Amerika, 2016). Thus, I would agree with Staver's argument that while family is a worldwide recognized right, family reunification is a site of contestation between national interests to control and secure borders and individual interests in living close to family members (Staver, 2013:69).

Moreover, in 2015 the two main forms of migration to Norway were labour with 18010 immigrants, followed by family reunification with 16580 (SSB, 2016). The national government considers it important to create effective policies seeking to regulate the entrance and length of stay of foreign citizens in Norway. However, as family immigration policies regulate emotional matters, they also must follow social values. Ideally, they should create positive effects for receiver societies as well as the newcomers and their family members, yet they also create negative effects – particularly as experienced by the two latter groups. In other words, immigration policies are tools of power (Grødem, 2014; Eriksen, 2013) that affect people's lives,

⁴⁷ Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948

conduct, freedom and social behaviors (Shore and Wright, 2005; Shore, Cris and Wright, 1997). Hence, if family immigration policies strengthen and restrict foreign citizens' possibility to live with their Norwegian spouse and children; then, foreigners feel the necessity to use diverse and sometimes not recognised mechanisms to be close to their beloved ones (King and Lulle, 2016; DeGenova, 2002).

Indeed, during my fieldwork, I have collected diverse examples from family migrants without a resident permit in Norway. For instance, Cristobal, who came to Norway as a tourist but never left the country. He is a civil engineer from Chile and father of a 4-year-old girl. He was "forced" to move to Norway because of his partner's current health situation. When the couple began their relationship they agreed to live separately in their own countries. This, according to the couple, will help them to respect each other lives. Anne (Cristobal's partner) would keep working and living in Norway, while Cristobal would do the same in Chile. They would visit each other during the holidays and keep constant communication via Skype and Facebook. *"Everything was working according to the plan"*: twice a year Anne traveled to Latin America to meet Cristobal, and he came me to Norway once a year. However, after giving birth, Anne was diagnosed with epilepsy. Since then she has been through several crises and her family is worried for her and her child. At the beginning, Anne's mother moved to Bergen to help with the baby care, but after a couple of months, she had to move back to her town, leaving Anne and her little daughter alone. According to Anne, the attacks come at any time risking her daughter's life and her own life. After this situation Cristobal moved to Norway to take care of his family.

In Chile I had my own company, house, and car; I have nothing here besides my wife and daughter. As you can see this apartment is too small for the three of us (one bedroom apartment) and because of my legal situation, I have not found any job yet... We basically have to survive with her money... You cannot imagine how frustrating this situation is for me, but my wife is sick, she needs me here... this is the place I have to be in.

Cristobal G. (Personal conversation, December 14th, 2015)

Because of her illness, Anne receives a disability pension, which allows her to survive without working. However, the amount received is too small to maintain three people. Thus, the couple decided to get married and apply for a residence permit on

the basis of family reunification to help Cristobal finding a job and having a legal status in Norway. Nevertheless, according to the UDI's regulations as he was previously married and his divorce was still in progress the couple could not get married or apply for family reunification (UDI, 2016). Faced with this situation, Anne and Cristobal sought legal advice to help them staying together. Since Cristobal entered Norway as a tourist, he had the right of free movement inside the Schengen Area up to 90 days during a period of 180 days (UDI, 2016). Therefore, the advisors suggested him to fill out all the required documents, return to his home country and wait out there for a decision. Nonetheless, seeing Anne's situation and knowing that a family reunification case could take several months to be processed⁴⁸; Cristobal decided to stay in the country regardless of the legal consequences of his actions. To him, the immigration authorities are the ones who are denying him the right to have a family:

“My place is here together with my wife and daughter. I cannot leave them when they need me more...It is inconceivable that the authorities want me to go away from my family...It goes against my rights”, he says.

A similar situation is registered by Dario (26) from Peru. He is married to a young Norwegian who works part-time for one of the local supermarkets in Bergen. They are parents of a 2-year-old child whose health condition is delicate. Dario had previously applied for family reunification in Norway; however, at that time, his wife did not meet the income required to be a sponsor. Thus, it turned to be a valid reason for the Norwegian authorities to deny Dario's residence permit, extending Dario's absence from his family. However, because of his son's health condition, he sought for diverse alternatives to come to Norway, deciding to enter the continent through The Netherlands holding a tourist visa and from there flying to Norway. At the time of the interview, (two and a half months after his arrival), the couple was applying again for family reunification, however they are afraid to get once again the permit denied due to the wife's low income:

If I apply from here at least I would have the right to stay in the country until the authorities give me a decision...during this time, I can support my wife... we hope they can understand the situation and approve the

⁴⁸ For spouses, registered partners and cohabitants normally takes **4** months from the moment that the application is handed in, until the UDI finishes processing the case (UDI, 2016). Available at: <https://www.udi.no/en/word-definitions/guide-to-case-processing-times-in-family-immigration-cases/?gh=u&gf=6&gs=1&go=4&c=chl>

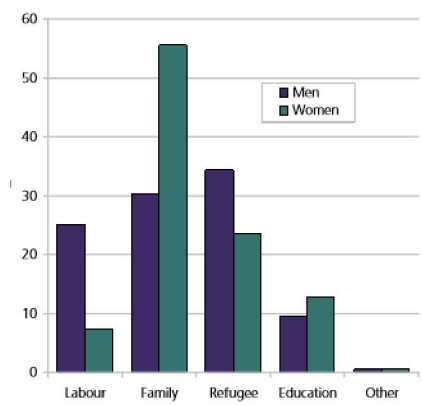
residence permit, this is a humanitarian reason. We are speaking about my son's life, it is not a whim. If they do not give me the chance to stay any longer with my family, I believe that we will end up moving to Peru. We are not rich out there but at least my son will have anything he needs: doctors, medicines, and his family, the most important of all.

Dario H. (Personal conversation, January 05th 2016)

The two aforementioned cases, demonstrate that family reunification is not always depicted as a voluntary migration. Indeed, while the majority of family members from Latin America have voluntarily migrated to be close to their relatives, some are forced to migrate because of what they understand as their moral obligations toward their family. Some individuals, similar to Cristobal and Dario, want to live in Norway to be together with their loved ones when their physical condition is critical and requires special care. Thus, one could conclude that restrictive family immigration policies may lead individuals to either break the law or to find a gap in the system to stay close to their relatives (Norway today, 2016). Or drawing on Jordan and Düvell's argument, immigrant's irregular status is the result of "exclusionary policies towards migrants" based on who is considered as a desired or undesired immigrant (Jordan and Düvell in King, 2012:6).

Most Family Migrants to Norway are Female

First-time immigrations among first-generation immigrants with non-Nordic citizenship, by reason for immigration and gender. Year of immigration 1990-2006. Per cent



Source: Population statistics, Statistics Norway

Available at: https://www.ssb.no/a/english/publikasjoner/pdf/rapp_200810_en/rapp_200810_en.pdf

Data collected during my fieldwork reflects a growing tendency of female migration to Norway (Henriksen, 2006; Kofman et al., 2000). Indeed, a report written by Toril Sandnes to the SSB in March 2016 indicates that most family migrants between 1990 and 2014 were women. The report shows that, 164,000 women from non-Nordic countries enter Norway on the basis of family reunification, compared to 84,000 men who migrated for the same reason. Analysing the data collected during my fieldwork, I would suggest three possible explanations for this phenomenon: a. The current economic requirements for family immigration restrict a considerable number of female Norwegians from bringing their foreign spouses to Norway (Block, 2014); b. Latin American women seek to escape from oppression, domination and coercion caused by the patriarchal societies in which they live (Riaño, 2015); and c. Rooted 'macho' behaviours prevent Latino men from voluntarily migrating to a more egalitarian society such as the Norwegian one (Englander et al., 2012)

On this matter, Yvonne Riaño (2015:47) argues that unequal gender relations in the country of origin and idealised views of European men influence female migration from Latin America to Europe. The author also indicates that European men also perceive Latin American women as docile, amorous and soft, characteristics that apparently are missing in some European women (Riaño, 2015:49). Thus, the combination of the abovementioned factors strongly influences the creation of mixed families consisting of European men and Latin American women and in consequence, increases female migration rates to Europe. However, Özden and Schiff (2007:281) claimed that immigration tendencies are related to economic fluctuations. This, according to the authors, means that during economic upturns men are more likely to migrate to Norway and to settle with their family there (ibid). This idea, could be also tied to the traditional role of men as breadwinners who seek to economically provide for their families (Bonjour and Kraler, 2014; David, 1973; Sgró Ruata, 2011). Indeed, as portrayed in chapter 4, Latino men are more likely to migrate when they are able to maintain their economic independence.

Immigration Policies: barrier or facilitator of family cohesion?

During the last years, immigration policies have been toughened mainly because of the increasing number of family migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. In Norway, for example, with the inclusion of the income requirement, many applications for family reunification have been rejected or delayed (Staver, 2014; Myrdahl, 2010; Hagelund, 2003). For instance Andreas (40) who needed to wait two years to be able to reunite with his wife:

It took me two years to bring my wife to Norway. Unfortunately, I was working part-time and could not demonstrate the required income to apply for family reunification. During that period I had to travel to her country twice and she came once to Norway. Because of these trips we spent a lot of money; but we needed to do them to demonstrate our relationship. We also took several pictures together and saved the tickets in case they wanted to see more proof.

Andreas P. (Personal conversation, July 23rd, 2015)

When family reunification policies are discussed, two groups of critics can be determined. The first group considers this set of laws as being part of a broader framework of naturalisation policies designed to integrate immigrants in the society, hence facilitator of integration and family establishment (Huddleston and Vink, 2015). On the other hand, we find those who describe this framework as a mere remedy to a “democratic deficit” (Huddleston and Vink, 2015:5). Indeed, they argue that the framework is exclusive rather than inclusive, aiming to maintain a socio-cultural, historical, economic and political homogeneity among those allowed in ‘Fortress Europe’ (Rytter, 2012:301). A straightforward proof of this position is offered by a study of the history and development of naturalisation policies in Europe and, specifically, Norway over the past three decades. We have seen that policymakers, even in one of the most democratic and inclusive states of Europe as Norway is, have shifted from welcoming migrants to steadily reducing their rights (Staver, 2014). The real and exclusive meaning of these regulations is indicated by the changes in migrants’ rights,

quotas to delimit the amount of non-European citizens accepted and the introduction of strict requirements for family migration (Rytter, 2012). Regulations, which departed from the original suggestions provided by ILO until the 1980s, tend to be a barrier to full integration of the aliens.

This brings us back to some of the introductory questions of this thesis: should we all be allowed to migrate freely? At which cost? Would this help reducing injustices against the vulnerable elements of the society? Would a combination of liberal and egalitarian laws determining the access to aliens and free migration help to tackle marriages of convenience? According to a recent study from D'Ancona (2015), based on previous research by Professor Huysmans (2000), immigrants are considered a threat to national security, socio-political and cultural values. However, such threats are often constructed and perceived rather than real, and commonly related to the barriers erected by the same migrants to protect themselves from being fully assimilated into the receiving society (Huysmans, 2000). Moreover, according to Markaki and Longhi (2013), receiving communities show a natural inclination to give certain supremacy to the territory of belonging by tending to categorise the other, the minority with negative stereotypes. The contact with minorities 'occupying' our space prompts us to develop feelings of defence, threat, and prejudice towards the other (Krysan, 2000). Such feelings are often strengthened by media and policymakers denouncing the costs brought on the society and its welfare system by migrants (Citrin et al., 1997). This stance towards migrants has led to excluding policies, which become a barrier to integration, but are perceived by the receiving society as a way to protect itself from an external danger (D'Ancona, 2015). It, therefore, is a threat to the receiving society that leads to the disintegration of the social cohesion perceived to be once a pillar of our western civilization. Homogeneity in a state is perceived to be one of the most fundamental values as it is related to the legitimacy of the socio-political power over its citizens (Elazar, 1998). Once a state has lost its homogeneity, policymakers and researchers argue that governing the country becomes difficult, or even worse impossible, as it is fragmented in a vast myriad of ungovernable elements (ibid).

Globalisation, ease of movement and global challenges undermining life quality in many countries across the globe have increased the migration flows, with millions of people reaching Europe in this last decade [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2014]. According to the statistics of OECD (2014), Norway

has received over 560,000 immigrants in the period 2003 – 2013, where almost 60% of them represent European citizens moving to the Scandinavian country mainly for economic reasons and family reunification (SSB, 2015). Main groups of non-European citizens, as previously discussed, are mostly coming from areas of Africa and Asia afflicted by conflicts (e.g. Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan) or lack security in their societies (e.g. Ethiopia, Eritrea) (ibid).

Therefore, there is a global trend to see a shift from 'national to global citizens' with a related weakening of the state and its institutions (Lagos, 2002). The headlines of the newspapers in the current century have been often pointing to the costs and threats from migrants to the Scandinavian state (see articles from *Aftenposten* and *VG* from 2002 until 2016 in Appendix). Furthermore, the Syrian and the Yemeni civil wars which started respectively in 2011 and 2015, have further aggravated the inflow of migrants, with some of them considered a threat to national security because of their violent background (Jureidini, 2010). These issues are shared also among Norwegian citizens via forums, media and in the elections. An increase in the support of the anti-immigration party FRP (the Progress Party) has led to a tightening of the migration policies. In addition, stricter family requirements have reduced the possibility of bypassing the policies set to reduce migrants' inflow to further protect the welfare system and the 'real Norwegians' from a loss of traditional values and social cohesion (Rytter, 2010).

Possible Effects of the Refugee Crisis and Brexit on Family Reunification Policies

Notwithstanding the social discussions and a vast range of newspapers' articles written on the topic, academic work has yet to be developed on the effects of the refugee crisis and Brexit on family reunification policies in Europe and, specifically, in Norway. Indeed, these events do not only affect the perception of migrants and migration trends among the locals; they also encourage governments to review and, in most of the cases, to strengthen immigration policies. Hence, it is important to open an anthropological debate on this matter.

In theory, policies have been written to guarantee people's rights (Eriksen, 2013; Jurado and Brochmann, 2013; O'Leary, 2010). However, in practice, governments fail to effectively protect these rights, especially when they enter into conflict with the national interests (Cortés M., 2004). For instance, the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe have influenced governments' decision to strengthen migration policies and border controls, e.g. France, Italy, Germany, Denmark, and Norway (Cooper, 2005). These measures are normally taken to protect national territories from "undesired" immigrants (Staver, 2008) who are seen as a threat to socio-cultural and economic values (Eriksen, 2013). Indeed, most of the European states instead of considering this group of migrants as a valuable human resource for their countries (Swing, 2016), tend to perceive them as "dangerous others" (Furman et al., 2016:2). This idea, hence, produces a clear distinction between locals and foreigners, where the first ones become superior and the leaders, while the second ones are often seen as powerless, voiceless (Baba, 2013), precarious, aggressive and violent (Eriksen, 2013). However, different authors such as Furman et al. (2016:2), claim that aliens can be also perceived as courageous, brave and heroic individuals, especially when they take the riskiest journeys to be close to their family members and provide them with a better existence.

Notwithstanding, the positive economic factor for European countries represented by immigrants, many taboos and differences in socio-cultural values enormously affect the ties between local lawmakers, receiving populations and affected families. This discussion has been analysing how the currently increasing flow of migrants to Europe has led the locals to react negatively towards welcoming people with humanitarian needs. Further increases in the flow of families from Islamic countries as well as from Africa may increase the strain on resources available for the receiving population. This could, in turn, lead to tougher family reunification policies reducing the possibilities from national citizens to bring their foreign spouses to Norway; which, concurrently, generates frustration among Norwegians with non-immigrant background who see themselves as victims of harsh immigration policies created to restrict the inflow of asylum seekers and refugees. Hence, transnational couples might find it harder to establish a relationship and endure the changing legislation. However, in the long run, tougher regulations might reduce social cohesion in Europe by creating sharper distinctions between the "other" and "us" and further increasing social exclusion,

ghettoization, and racism (Block, 2014). These processes raise social and economic instability in receiving countries leading to negative phenomena that have marked human history numerous times, e.g. persecutions, ethnic cleansings, civil wars (Furman et al., 2016).

One of the most evident products of the social exclusion and negative views on immigration can be highlighted in the results of the English referendum on the 23rd June 2016. The way the European Parliament has managed recent flows of migrants from Africa and Asia has been the focal point of discussion by the majority of European media. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have generated a fracture in our society between those opposing immigration at all costs and those supporting it. England, Germany, Austria, France, Denmark mainly, although this has happened in many other states as well, have been experiencing a rise in extreme-right, nationalist movements supporting a break-up from the rules imposed by the EU Parliament and Commission. England's former Prime Minister (PM) David Cameron in January 2013 proposed a referendum to renegotiate the membership of UK in EU aimed at boosting his popularity before the elections (Economist, 2016). Nevertheless, the increasing dissatisfaction of the British people with immigration and the risk of being flooded by immigrants was among the main reasons Britons on the 23rd June 2016 voted to leave the EU (ibid). The right-wing UK Independence Party (UKIP) has been building its electorate among those dissatisfied with European policies and the lower working class, which saw itself affected by the cuts in social welfare due to growing immigration rates (BBC, 2014). The historic referendum might now set them on the way to a union with some of the Tories sponsoring the "Leave campaign" for the next national polls to strengthen their chances of winning, although on the public interviews they have declared to reject any alliance with the Tories (Independent, 2016; BBC, 2014). In any case, whoever might win the next elections in the UK will face a hard task: pulling the country out of EU and deliver on the promises of reducing immigration (Economist, 2016). Thus, in the near future UK might further strengthen immigration laws, reducing opportunities for married couples and registered partners to live together in Britain unless fulfilling stricter terms (BBC, 2016). Moreover, throughout Europe, these results have been a shock wave, which increased the popularity of many anti-EU parties, with the risk of similar issues spreading around the continent. Indeed, according to the Norwegian Progress Party [Fremskrittspartiet (FrP)], this referendum

has been the base for all EU members to analyse the needs of the populations of different countries and discuss some urgent issues, e.g. immigration, welfare services (E24, 2016; Aftenposten, 2016).

Finally, depending on the development in the British economy as well as the European one in the next couple of years, politics in Europe, and in the specific case of Norway, may completely reshape immigration and family reunification laws. Restricting the access to migrants and making Europe an “impenetrable fortress for undesired” as Australia is, or opening its doors to new arrivals of people in need of humanitarian support are the choices EU politicians will have to select from.

Conclusion to the chapter

In Chapter 5 I have not only discussed the different positions covered by my investigation regarding the influence of the political framework on the daily lives and decisions of Norwegian citizens; indeed, I have as well discussed the influence on the collective psyche of forecastable and unforecastable, external factors (e.g. social media, wars, terrorism, humanitarian catastrophes, mass migration), which can turn into a spiral of toughening up border controls, migration laws and in the specific family reunification policies.

Additionally, I have debated the concept of marriage and how it, in effect, becomes a requirement to family reunification. It was argued that married couples have higher possibilities to reunify within a shorter period of time and documenting less requirements. However, understanding that marriages offer a series of benefits that cannot be granted through other type of relationship, immigration officers are extremely careful while analysing applications for family reunification seeking to detect any possible marriage of convenience or forced marriage.

Furthermore, chapter 5 also indicated that more females than males from Latin America move to Norway under the grounds of family reunification. This situation is likely to be a response to idealized images of European men and Latin American women. Also, the data collected showed that family migration patterns are tied to economic criteria. For instance, Norwegians from lower strata have limited possibilities

to reunify with their foreign spouses due to high income requirements. Additionally, Latin men are more likely to move to Norway if they are able to maintain economic independence and keep their breadwinners role.

Moreover, it was said that stricter family reunification policies become a barrier to family cohesion. Thus, the current political structure can be described as an excluding framework aiming to maintain the national homogeneity and reducing the possible costs that migrants may cause to the receiving society. Nevertheless, tough immigration policies may lead to complicated legal situations as family migrants desire to be with their loved ones regardless of the costs and consequences.

Finally, this thesis opened a debate about the refugee crisis and Brexit and their effects on the Norwegian family reunification policies. It was said migrants can be either perceived as dangerous elements for the national stability or as courageous individuals who are able to take dangerous journeys to be with their families. However, constructed images of migrants portraying them as a potential socio-economic risk to developed nations and the growing immigration waves lead European countries to toughen immigration policies to prevent the entrance of undesired migrants. It, therefore, would have repercussions on the existing family reunification policies, reducing even more the possibilities to marry foreign nationals unless fulfilling stricter requirements.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is not a clear consensus of the notion of family as it has been ideologically constructed in time and space and shaped by social, cultural and economic factors (Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako, 1997). Traditionally, family has been understood as the nucleus created by a father, a mother and their children (Grillo, 2008). Nowadays, globalization, technology, mass media and migration movements influence the formation of new types of families, including same-sex partners, cohabitants, single-parent families, and foster and adoptive families, among the most common types (Howell, 2009; Melhuus, 2009; Grillo, 2008; Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, conflicting views on the ideal model of family have arisen. For instance, European societies show a better acceptance towards same-sex partners, while some Latin American, African and Asian nations still perceive them as an abomination or aberration (Andersson et al., 2004; Garrison and Scott, 2012). These last ones believe that same-sex couples are unable to rear a child without generating psychological and moral damages (Grillo, 2008; Arriagada, 2001). Those in favour of homosexuality, instead, conceive this type of family as not differing from the heterosexual couples, thus conferring them the same rights and obligations of traditional families (Garrison and Scott, 2012). On the other hand, patriarchal societies are often labelled as oppressive and cruel (Grillo, 2008). Indeed, Westerners claim that women living in patriarchal societies have no agency, are passive, submissive and may often be victims of mental, physical and/or sexual violence (ibid). Hence, to prevent the dissemination of oppressive thoughts, Occidental societies have a tendency to establish policies on gender equality and women's empowerment as well as creating mechanisms to control the admission of citizens from third world nations: possibly poor, deprived, uneducated, violent, and corrupted (King and Lulle, 2016; Bonjour and Kraler, 2014; Eriksen, 2013; Rytter, 2010).

However, notwithstanding the aforementioned facts, family is seen as the most important social institution (Carlos and Sellers, 1972). Thus, it has been globally recognized as a fundamental right since December 1948⁴⁹. Nevertheless, the family cohesion is threatened, in some cases, by restrictive immigration policies that limit

⁴⁹ See Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of the United Nations (UN) and the article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

citizens from western societies from freely choosing a partner in a lower position in the global hierarchy, in terms of gender, race or economic status (Block, 2014). For instance, Norwegians married to Latin Americans must fulfil a series of requirements, including a minimum income, minimum age and the demonstration of the realness of his/her relationship, in order to bring in their non-European spouses to Norway (Pöyry, 2010; Eggebø, 2012b; UDI, 2016).

In anthropology, the phenomenon of migration has been highly debated. However, few anthropologists have focused on family reunification policies and even less have shown interest on studying the flow of people between Norway and Latin America. Indeed, according to Benedicte Bull (2015), Norwegian anthropologists interested in Latin America prefer to work with topics related to environment, indigenous and non-indigenous, social inequalities and social responsibility. These themes may be investigated more than that of family reunification as they are regarded by the society as exotic, thus more attractive than an introspective analysis on the receiving society. Indeed, studying family reunification and its related policies leads to a critical discussion on the values that distinguish or assimilate “they” and “us”. Hence, overcoming the constructed obstacles that a receiving society erects in the process of regulating immigration brings it to analyse all its own principles including those that it would often prefer to hide by demonizing and accusing the “poor others” for its own lacks.

Therefore, by focusing on mixed families consisting of Norwegians without immigrant background and Latin Americans, I placed myself outside of the controversies of forced marriages and refugees bringing their families to Europe. Hence, I aimed to find similarities and differences between “they” and “us”, which can be exploited to produce inclusive rather than exclusive family reunification policies.

The data collected during the fieldwork shows that most Norwegians perceive Latin America as a poor an exotic continent with warm and family oriented people but polluted by corruption, violence and precarious health and educational systems. Therefore, many locals also believe that Latin Americans wish to move to Norway to improve their social conditions and thus, they could possibly become a burden to the welfare system. Hence, these ideas may influence policy-makers decision to toughen immigration policies to prevent misuses and abuses of their systems. Nevertheless,

these widespread perceptions of Latino migrants are mainly produced by mass media, as only a reduced number of Norwegians have had a real interaction with Latinos. Additionally, the results of my investigation also show that assuming that all migrants from poorer countries are deprived, uneducated and oppressive would be a mistake. Indeed, some of my interviewees indicated that by moving to Norway they lose prestige and recognition, allowing their partners to have dominant role while they become socially and economically dependent. Thus, one could say that it is more or less expected that individuals in lower positions in the global hierarchy abandon their own comfort zone to allow their families to enjoy the benefits offered by more developed countries, including safety and organized health and education systems. Perhaps, this expectation has its origins in the colonial era where lighter-skinned people were important to maintain the elite and “improve the race” while darker-skinned people were associated to poverty and submissiveness (Ystanes, 2016).

Moreover, this study also showed that mixed families’ perceptions of family and love are not necessarily in line with the public view. Indeed, migrants and their families often question the focus of immigration officers on “more practical criteria” (income, age difference, culture affinity, language, among others) to accept or deny the access of non-European citizens (Eggebø, 2012). Applicants and sponsors think that family establishment and family reunification should not be restricted by economic requirements, as love and compatibility cannot be measured in economic terms. Additionally, one could suggest that restrictive immigration requirements place Norwegian citizens in a dominant position, testing in this way his/her true commitment to their partner. These policies also situate migrant spouses in a constant dependence on its sponsor emulating the patriarchal societies, which the laws try to distance.

Furthermore, I had also discussed how family reunification policies and the still existing gender gap restrict the possibilities of Norwegian women to establish a family with a non-European citizen. Indeed, the data provided by Statistics Norway shows that every year more female than male foreigners move to Norway under the basis of family reunification. I had suggested two possible explanations for this situation: on the one hand, rooted macho behaviours prevent men from patriarchal societies to adapt to more egalitarian societies, thus marriages between Norwegian women and foreign citizens tend to end up in divorce or temporal separations. On the other hand, female

Norwegians have lower possibilities to demonstrate the income required for being a suitable sponsor.

Finally, the results of this study contribute to clarify how these policies intend to hinder the rising phenomenon of family reunification by restraining the life of a significant number of Norwegians and their families. Hence, by developing further researches on this issue we may be able to assist policymakers in developing both a more cohesive and concurrently integrating society reducing frictions among the different groups and actors inside a nation. Additionally, further anthropological studies on family reunification policies would allow societies to have broader understanding of the current immigration crisis, and their effects on the formation and established of mixed families consisting of citizens from developed nations and citizens from third world nations. These kinds of studies would also help policy makers to detect possible loopholes used by immigrants to reach wealthier nations.

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