2009

Surviving the Arctic : narrative identity of foreign women in Norway

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Surviving the Arctic:
Narrative Identity of Foreign Women in Norway

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
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San Francisco, California
May 2009

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCSICSO

Dissertation Abstract

Surviving the Arctic: Narrative Identity of Foreign Women in Norway

In the little-covered area of women within the realm of transnational relocation, this study strives to find new understandings that could be applied towards creating traditions that aid communities in learning to embrace the unfamiliar. In learning more about what shapes the changes in the lives of women who change cultures permanently, there is an increased possibility of understanding how cultures influence each other. In this research, I explore the unique situation of foreign women as the "spectacular other" in Norwegian society. The research focus at hand is the exploration of identity, belonging, and change into the "other" as a means of survival. This has been done through highlighting the narratives of these "others", and though conversation illuminating their journey of transformation. I explore how this transformation of self plays a large role in how they interact with the world: how they raise their children, interact with Norwegian society, and whether they are able to find a professional life in Norway. In general, whether they are able to survive intact, with their sense of self still connected to the pre-Norway self.

The theoretical framework for this research is that of critical hermeneutics. The research protocol is that described by Herda (1999). The research categories are that of identity, solicitude and imagination, including Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity (1984) and Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of "fusion of horizons" (1988).

All seven participants are women from various parts of the world who had chosen to move permanently with their Norwegian husband to Norway. This is research that can translate into a deepening of understanding with regards to many facets of the transnational experience: immigration, new curriculum, exchange opportunities, policy change. In a world which is experiencing a flux of cultures traversing these boundaries in great numbers, understanding better the needs of peoples shifting into new worlds can help much of the misunderstanding, friction and fear that occur. While this research focuses on women who have the choice in where they chose to move, much of the relevance in terms of policy and implication can be applied towards immigrants of all natures. By exploring the narratives of women who have experienced transnational relocation, their voices can help inform policy change, as well as an ensuing shift in how homogeneous societies learn to accept outsiders. This understanding can aid in creating new immigration policy, help alter existing curriculum and further cross cultural communication.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Tamar Davis Larsen	May 8, 2009
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Ellen Herda for showing me that individuals can help make profound changes in our world. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Patricia Mitchell and Dr. Emma Fuentes for their encouragement and support.

I am grateful to the women in Norway who shared their stories with me, and in this way, allowed this research to come forth.

I would like to thank Becky, my Southern friend extraordinaire for her generous hospitality, amazing cooking and for taking care of me when I am in Norway.

To Debbie, thank you for coming to visit each year from Norway and for helping to keep me sane and grounded throughout my own journey in the Arctic.

To Hanne Stabursvik, though far away in Buenos Aires, your unwavering friendship and support lifted up my wings when they were too weak to fly alone.

To my six brothers and sisters, thank you for helping me out in many small ways throughout this process. I would like to say a special thank you to Robin and Sabrina for taking care of my daughter while I was in classes.

To my wonderful and supportive mother, Esther Ljuba Davis, thank you for everything that you do to make my life here sweet and for all the weekends that you helped me by caring for Pia while I was in school.

And lastly, I thank my daughter Sofia (Pia) Arielle Larsen. The wisdom, kindness and beauty that you share with those around you each day inspire and delight me. I love you more than the stars and the moon.

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CHAPTER ONE:

THE RESEARCH FOCUS

Introduction

In this research, I explore the unique situation of foreign women as the "spectacular other" in Norwegian society. This may provide new knowledge in the realm of narrative identity and the transnational experience, for it is through understanding that we create societies of inclusivity and expanded opportunity. While living in Norway for eight years, I began to seek understanding of all the discordant elements I saw surrounding the issues of identity, cross cultural communication and re-imagination of self. Through understanding the experiences of transnational women within a homogeneous cultural setting, there may emerge the beginnings of fresh perspectives on narrative identity and culture change.

Research and Significance

The research focus at hand is the exploration of identity, belonging, and change into the "other" as a means of survival. This has been done through highlighting the narratives of these "others", and though conversation illuminating their journey of transformation. I explore how this transformation of self plays a large role in how they interact with the world: how they raise their children, interact with Norwegian society, and whether they are able to find a professional life in Norway. In general, whether they are able to survive intact, with their sense of self still connected to the pre-Norway self.

The theoretical framework for this research is that of critical hermeneutics. With Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity as the cornerstone, *mimesis* (past, future, and present) and *ipse* and *idem* (self that changes and self that remains the same) guide the unfolding of emplotment. In addition, Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of "fusion of

horizons" provided additional grounding. The idea of understanding language as central to how one sees oneself in the world is a powerful tenet within the story of each participant in this study. The anthropological framework of Clifford Geertz and Ruth Benedict provided an underlying understanding of how a shift in culture affects how one looks not only at one's own identity, but how one identifies with the world-at-large. The Norwegian anthropologists, Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Marianne Gullestad provide contemporary insights with regards to Norwegian culture, its values, and traditions, all of which sheds light upon the stories of the research participants. This allows for a deepening of understanding as to how women who chose to undertake a permanent transnational move to Norway change in terms of the ideas that tie into self, identity, belonging and home.

This dissertation follows the three directives below:

1) How can women bring their past traditions and cultural knowledge into their new land, while still retaining their identity and their sense of self as they navigate deeper into a homogeneous society?
2) What are the primary ways in which foreign women in Norway find meaning through the manifestation of solicitation, understanding and care in Norway?
3) How do these select women envision their future, with regards to imagination and new possibilities?

The original categories in my pilot study also revolved around identity, solicitude and imagination. But as I had not yet found the right words to capture these ideas, at the time I called them fusion of horizons, mimesis, and identity. These three concepts remain pivotal in the exploration of the transnational experience of foreign women moving to Norway. However, after holding conversations with the additional participants, I realized

that the categories of identity, solicitude and imagination were more apt and appropriate for this research. This was due in part to the fact that after the data was collected, the emphasis needed to be on how they imagine their future.

While I am a person who has undergone the very transnational experience this research focuses on, the participants still living in Norway are what provide the force behind this study's data, its categories, and its emerging truths. Each participant embraces (to a different degree) the concept of *ipse* and *idem* (change), and in turn, offers insight as to how one's very soul shifts with a change in cultural and geographical boundaries. This is research that can translate into a deepening of understanding with regards to many facets of the transnational experience: immigration, new curriculum, exchange opportunities, policy change. In a world which is experiencing a flux of cultures traversing these boundaries in great numbers, understanding better the needs of peoples shifting into new worlds can help much of the misunderstanding, friction and fear that occur. While this research focuses on women who have the choice in where they chose to move, much of the relevance in terms of policy and implication can be applied towards immigrants of all natures.

Significance

In the little-covered area of women within the realm of transnational relocation, I strived to find new understandings that could be applied towards creating traditions that aid communities in learning to embrace the unfamiliar. For it is a group that is largely un-heard in research literature. And yet, it is the very group that creates new traditions, blending the culture they come from, with the culture they have adopted, shaping the ideas and goals of future generations through raising families and interacting with the world. In

learning more about what shapes the changes in the lives of women who change cultures permanently, there is an increased possibility of understanding how cultures influence each other. By exploring the narratives of women who have experienced transnational relocation, their voices can help inform policy change, as well as an ensuing shift in how homogeneous societies learn to accept outsiders. This understanding can aid in creating new immigration policy, help alter existing curriculum and further cross cultural communication. In Chapter Seven I discuss the tangible significance in terms of my findings and implications.

Summary

In this research, the historical, political and cultural context of transnational women living in Norway is explored. Through the hermeneutic framework of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Hannah Arendt and Richard Kearney, the process of research through narrative is used to uncover the shift in identity that these women undergo in changing cultures. Through this critical hermeneutic lens encompassing personal narrative and conversation, I explore the evolving identity between the old self and the new, with regards to women crossing the deeply buried boundaries of Norwegian culture. The significance in gaining understanding in terms of gender and narrative identity may be tangible. Becoming an integral part of one's community is paramount to true belonging. Understanding in this realm can offer social commentary that can merge into social action.

CHAPTER TWO:

BACKGROUND OF NORWAY

Introduction

An exploration of Norway must begin with its beautiful and bountiful nature, as it is the connection to nature that has played a profound role in forming the very cornerstones of Norwegian culture. The connection to the fjords, and the isolation that came from small communities within the midst of great mountains, forests and waterways is still felt in the general culture today. For even though modern Norwegians interact more with larger societies on a regular basis, they are generally quite happy with isolation and silence (Eriksen 2004). This is in a way not documented much elsewhere in the world. This connection to nature in the many small, rural villages within the midst of one of the richest countries in the world has not been continued by accident. Because of the pervasive role nature plays in Norwegian culture today, policies have been taken to insure the continuation of old ways of life, this includes small, family run farms that are heavily subsidized by the State. It is conscious connection to its natural history and past that helps keep Norwegian society connected to its ancient culture.

Geography

The geographical element of the Norwegian landscape plays an almost tangible role in its psychological make-up. The long, dark, harsh winters, coupled by short, frantic summers filled with unyielding sunlight has helped shape a culture that embraces the extreme. Ice covers much of the city sidewalks all winter, and this is considered normal. Only recently, do shopkeepers use rock salt or gravel to keep their storefronts safe. Figure

1 shows a map of Norway, and illustrates the many islands and waterways that help make up Norway's geographical landmass, as well as its borders with Sweden and Russia.

Figure 1: Map of Norway

There has been an odd leap in Norway's attitude towards these icy sidewalks: while for so long this was a hearty part of life there in the winter, now Oslo is putting in under-sidewalk heating cables. As if they have skipped all the normal, pedestrian techniques of making life easier (such as using salt or gravel on icy sidewalks), and moved straight into the high-tech version. This is a dynamic found over and over in Norwegian life. As if dramatic moves from the old-fashioned into a very modern, technologically savvy culture

needs no transition. And yet, these transitions are missing, as they are important. Moving into one season or custom without a middle space for reflection is unnatural. Because the seasons in Norway are synonymous with dramatic shifts, natural things (like filtered sunlight) become precious. The minute sunshine comes through the clouds after a dark winter, people turn their faces to the sky in silence, desperate for light. This physical reaction is mimicked by the emotional and social transformation that occurs. As soon as springtime arrives, Norwegians become more social, more outgoing and increasingly friendly (Gullestad 1992:162). Visitors to Norway are often struck by the drastic differences in their interactions with Norwegians depending on which season they are there. Norwegians are like stoic butterflies; their physical transformation influenced by natures recurring rhythm.

The landscape of Norway is one primarily made up of forests—arriving by plane, one cannot help but notice the abundance of pristine forests, surrounded by undulating fjords weaving in and out of barely visible fishing communities. There are few major cities, and even the largest (Oslo) is quite small by international standards. In Oslo, one can still go skiing, hiking in the mountains, or sailing in the fjords. For it is the nature here that is the star, not the unimaginative architecture or expensive and limited shopping. In this way, Oslo is a capital unlike any other in Europe. And it is only in finding a connection to nature and a way in which to enjoy it first hand that outsiders will be able to understand a major element of the Norwegian psyche (Eriksen 2004). It is a country the size of California (385,155 square kilometers), with only a fraction of its population. With 50,000 islands, many populated only in the summertime when vacationers use their summer cabins there. One can imagine that with such vastness populated by only 4.7

million people, that there would be enough open space for each person to be alone in their own forest.

History, Language and Society

Norway's history must be addressed here in order to paint a fuller picture of the major forces that have shaped its current communities. While a tremendous sea-faring Viking tradition is still evident today (in the mid-summer night's boat parades, with thousands of boats in each village sailing slowly through the fjords), its role in shaping modern Norwegian society cannot be underscored enough. The Vikings were strong, tough, rough, and written about extensively in the great "Sagas" of the Dark/Middle Ages (860-1000 A.D.). They were both feared and respected. Because the men often left their farms and villages for months and years at a time, this created a society in which women were expected to be completely self-sufficient (Hastrup 1997:104). This is another trait which carries over into current life—there are more Norwegian women sitting on company boards today than in any other country. The lines between the genders are much less visible than in most of the world, and this has an effect on the women that move there from abroad—as they have usually never encountered such egalitarian (or, lack of chivalry) in a society (Gullestad 2002:59).

The "four hundred years of darkness" is often how the period in history is referred when Denmark owned Norway. During this time, all wealth, education and prized employment was held in the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen. Norway was stripped of its natural riches (timber, fish, laborers) in order to cede its loss of independence (Hastrup 1997:128). Then, in the early 19th century, immediately following the Napoleonic Wars, Norway was forcibly entered into "union" with Sweden. This was in 1814. However, it

was not a true union, but a new ownership, albeit one with more freedom artistically and intellectually than had preciously been imposed by the Danish years of darkness. It was with this new opening that a kind of Norwegian National Romanticism began to take root and flourish. This is the era in which Knut Hamsun, Henrich Ibsen, and Edvard Grieg all created their masterpieces. And with this artistic flourishing, came a renewed movement for independence. The poetry, art, literature and music were accompanied by equal fervor in Norwegian newspapers, communities and organizations. In 1905 Norway gained full independence, and elected their King (Haakon IV). This King was originally a Danish prince, and spoke Danish until he died. This is interesting to note in that it addresses the linguistic and cultural blurring between the three counties of Denmark, Norway and Sweden that still exist today. Many dialects of Norwegian spoken along its eastern coast are indistinguishable from the Swedish dialects spoken across the political border. Eriksen (1997:106) writes that today it is difficult to say "where the Norwegian dialects merged into Swedish ones." This lends itself to an ambiguous national identity with regards to the how the Scandinavian countries relate to one another (Hastrup 1997:97).

While Norwegian history has been interpreted from a specific perspective, there is need for a re-interpretation today of its history, one that can include the foreigners of all kinds that live within it's midst. Understandably, the severe topography influenced many factors of Norwegian cultural development. Most people were farmers, and these farms were usually small, and quite isolated from one another (Eriksen 1997:104). Each village still maintains its own identity, shown outwardly in the form of their national costume (worn on special celebrations—such as weddings, christenings, and on May 17th, their national independence day), as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: *Bunad*, or national Norwegian costumes

The terrain in most of the country is one of steep mountains and valleys, with lakes and fjords a constant feature. This all lent itself to helping form societies that were entirely self-sufficient, and accustomed to long periods of solitude. The dramatic landscape, coupled with harsh weather and isolated communities meant that people needed to help one another during a crisis. This in turn meant that one must abide by the strict mores and unspoken codes of Norwegian culture in order to be accepted as a part of this community. One's very life or livelihood depended on adherence to such codes. Perhaps this is why modern Norwegian communities still allow only a minor margin of error in behaving "un-Norwegian" in order to be accepted (Gullestad 2002:47).

Politically, Norway discouraged foreigners from living or moving into its realm by utilizing policies that forbade non-Norwegians from residing permanently in Norway. It took this one step further then most counties in terms of limiting immigration, actually forbidding certain groups (such as Jews) to even step foot on Norwegian soil without a special permit from the King. This law was in existence until 1907 (Eriksen 2004). Eriksen writes (1997:105) "Norway is widely considered one of the most nationalist countries in Europe, one where the processes of cultural homogenization and legitimation of the state through invented national symbols are generally perceived, locally and among comparitivist scholars, as a unanimous success." The rituals shared by Norwegians reinforce and uphold the idea of a homogenous culture, bonded by "sameness". Eriksen writes (1997:108):

> Rituals are also important in this sense of linking personal experience, and particularly childhood experience, with nationhood. Thus, Norwegian Christmas trees are decorated not with angels, but with small Norwegian flags; the main annual public ritual, Constitution Day, is dominated by ice-cream eating children carrying little national flags; and even cross-country skiing, which is enforced upon children through school, has an explicit national content. The activity of skiing makes the children more Norwegian, and they are told that much.

Gullestad believes that there are activities that reinforce to the Norwegians their unique place in the world, as well as their bond with each other as a society with one set of traditions. She writes (1992:140), "such activities as "going for a walk" (*å gå tur*), cross-country skiing (which is codified as a national activity) and seeking "peace and quiet" (*fred og ro*) all help Norwegians feel connected with one another in an unspoken manner." The demographics pattern of immigration to Norway is outlined in Table 1. In this table, it is interesting to note that 17% of the immigrants to Norway are there due to marriage with a Norwegian national.

It must also be noted that Norway has had a history of helping people from around the world, serving in many Non-Govermental Organizations, as well as leading political awareness (with the Oslo Peace Accord, the annual Oslo Nobel Peace Prize…) of how oppressed peoples around the world need help. So while there is a prevailing belief by Norwegians that Norway should remain homogeneous, there is also parallel tradition of Norwegians working outside of Norway to help disadvantaged others around the world (primarily in third world countries).

While Table 1 provides a demographic breakdown of immigration in Norway, it doesn't provide the details about how this differs by region (in Norway) or mention how some immigrants are more highly visible than others. Norway lets in very specific refugees depending on the political situation happening in the world. 30 years ago, the Norwegian government let in many Pakistani immigrants, and this is now the most established and visible group in Oslo (with their own neighborhoods and such). Many of these Pakistani immigrants were eventually offered Norwegian citizenship, and all the benefits that accompany the change in stature from refugee to Norwegian national. 10 years ago, the strongest immigrant presence was that of Kosovo and Albanian refugees (due to the war in the Balkans). Many of these refugees remain in Norway, but have not yet been given Norwegian citizenship. The most current group of refugees visible in both Oslo, as well as in the smaller towns of Vestfold (the county where this research took place) is the Iraqi. Their visibility is heightened due to the fact that so many of the women who walk around in town are covered. While the Balkan refugees are also Muslim, they tend not to express themselves visually in as differing a fashion that that of Norwegians. This is not so with the Iraqis. The inclusion of the many differences that the refugee groups bring with them

(the different religions, foods, holidays and traditions) are at the crux of much conflict in Norway. The media in Norway continues to explore this conflict in a positive way, both through newspaper articles as well as television and news programs. There is an intellectual openness towards newcomers, and towards oppressed peoples who take refuge in Norway. What is less forthcoming is an embrace in any permanent way.

There is a kind of latent denial that modern Norwegian culture is poly-ethnic. This upholds the current policy of only ethnically Norwegians being "real" Norwegians, and everybody else being a Norwegian resident only (Eriksen 2001). There needs to be a new kind of storytelling—one that include the new stories, of foreigners, particularly women, who exist within its borders, raising families and creating new generations of Norwegians. Because Norway's nationalist identity does not conform to its social reality, there is a hidden discord. In examining the lives of foreign women who are a part of the new stories being told in Norway, I hope to provide a fresh chapter of illumination regarding social policy in harmony with its true, current reality.

Immigration in Norway
9.7% of population = immigrants, or born in Norway of immigrant parents:
Break down of heritage/race
203,000= European background, 52,000 from non-E.U. countries
174,000= Asian background
56,000= African background
16,000= from Latin America
9,000= North America
Total= 328,000 immigrated to Norway during 1990-2007
27% as refugees
11% reunified with refugees now living in Norway
17% for marriage with Norwegian national
21% as labor immigrants
11% to study

Table 1: Demographics of Norway

Summary

Norway is a culture influenced by its nature and unified by its shared social vision. While an active voice in the realm of social action globally, there is little attention given to those of un-Norwegian extraction within its midst. Refugees are looked at benevolently, but with a temporary welcome offered. The women included in this research are all foreign women who have voluntarily moved to Norway (as opposed to refugees). All of them have married Norwegians that they met while abroad (in either the women's home country, or in a third, neutral country), and then moved to Norway to start a married life together. Thus, the culture of Norway itself plays a tremendous role in both the dynamic and in the practical elements of this marriage—for they are not just marrying a Norwegian man, but they are effectively marrying the Norwegian culture, with all its limitations, homogeneity and most particular life view. In this case, there are many relevant and unique issues at

hand. Because Norway is one of the world's most homogenous cultures, its history, traditions, folklore, language and outlook remain much unchanged throughout the past 400 years. Here we must address the issue of nationalism itself, which is proving to be something that is holding Norway back from embracing a more inclusive cultural view. While Norwegian society is intensely proud of its unique and pure way of life (with nature as a pervasive and powerful role), so too must its society include outsiders into its realm in terms of identity, action and psychological inclusion.

A context for a deeper exploration of the research at hand is provided in the following chapters. In Chapter Three a review of literature relating to Norwegian culture, homogeneous societies, and transcultural understanding are presented, undergirded by the critical hermeneutic framework categories of identity, solicitude, and imagination. In Chapter Four, the research process, conceptual framework, research categories, data collection, data analysis, pilot study and background of the researcher are described. In Chapter Five the data are presented, and in Chapter Six, the data are analyzed. In the final chapter, Chapter Seven, the summary, implications, future research, personal reflection and conclusion are presented.

CHAPTER THREE:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

While there is not extensive early literature that relates specifically to Norway, there are both physical and cultural anthropologists whose work is pertinent to researching homogenous cultures, as well as exploring identity as groundwork for cultural well-being. The literature from Norwegian anthropologists is primarily contemporary, as it is only in the last few decades that Norwegian culture has come into its own entity on the world scene with regards to academic journals, anthropological organizations and publications. Its sense of self as a culture-at-large is now strongly determined both by its social welfare state system, as well as its increasing political status and tremendous wealth (due to the discovery of oil reserves in the North Sea, circa 1980's). Interpretive anthropology provides the basis for the pertinent literature in this research, with literature from American and European anthropologists offering the necessary groundwork for framing the issues at hand. Finally, critical hermeneutic literature relating to the categories of identity, solicitude and imagination is presented.

As primary anthropological sources, I explore the works of Ruth Benedict and Clifford Geertz with regards to creating a strong anthropological framework. In a secondary role, the works of Claude Levi-Strauss, Bronislaw Malinowski, Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Marianne Gullestad are utilized as the basis for additional insights necessary for supporting this framework. With regards to critical hermeneutics, literature from Richard Kearney, Hans Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur and Martin Heidegger provides the basis for exploring the literature relating to the central themes in this research.

Sex and Marriage in Norwegian Society

Bronislaw Malinowski's work, Sex, Culture and Myth (1963), investigates the connections between sexuality, marriage, human behavior and society. His pivotal question of how marriage is the very cornerstone of a culture can be utilized in unexpected but revealing ways when put to use in analyzing Norwegian society, and its views towards marriage and sex. And because in this research, the foreign women in Norway are living there due to the very fact that they have chosen to marry a native Norwegian, the differing views upon marriage, sex and gender roles play an important part of how they operate within that culture, and add greatly to the friction that often occurs between cultural expectations. This is to say, they are usually at great odds with how marriage functions, as its role in Norwegian culture is quite different from that of the participants native countries. Marriage in Norway is no longer important within that cultural context, but seen merely as an upper class nicety—as a kind of luxury, or old-fashioned and antiquated tradition. Marriage, domesticity, sexual relations and having children out of wedlock are all accepted norms and are viewed with a frankness and liberal bent that is not experienced in mainstream society in many other countries. The Scandinavian cultures are famous for this. It often creates a great chasm between foreigners married to Norwegians, and this is exacerbated when the couple chooses to live in Norway. Malinowski's research in this area is quite helpful in analyzing how and why the conflicts arise.

Malinowski writes (1945:19) of the importance of marriage, home life:

> We all know that the "family life" means for us, first and foremost, the atmosphere of home, all the innumerable small acts and attentions in which are expressed the affection, the mutual interest, the little preferences, and the little antipathies which constitute intimacy.

He draws this emphasis on ritual, family and community as a cornerstone of how a culture evolves. In gender roles in Norway shifting from one parent staying at home, to both parents working, there is an evolution in how the sexes relate to one another, and also in how Norwegian society views its structure and value of parenting, marriage, and relationships. He expresses how when the family structure changes, that the entire dynamic of the family unit shifts. He stressed the importance of family as a unifying structural entity—as the very nexus of a strong and healthy community. He writes (1945:19):

> Indeed if we remember that these imponderable yet all important facts of actual life are part of the real substance of the social fabric, that in there are spun the innumerable threads which keep together the family.

Eriksen points out the discrepancy in roles that gender plays with regards to sex. He writes (2000:3) that "sex roles in Norway are characterized by a higher degree of equality between men and women than in most other countries." This speaks to the issue of unexpected roles that foreign women find themselves in when they move to Norway. Men and women have different expectation with regards to the division of household labor, as well as with the divergence from traditional roles outside the house in the workplace. So while both men and women are expected to work outside the home, and contribute equally to the building of an economically strong national economy, there is not the expectation that a mother will stay at home and raise the children. This could just as easily be delegated to the father. But the more usual solution is to place the children in "*barnehage*" (childcare or preschool) so that both parents can maintain their professional life. Gullestad writes (2007:6), "During these decades family life and the relations between the genders have changed dramatically, as most women have taken up paid work outside the home. This change has profound consequences in most social sectors." Policies have been made

to ensure that a men and women have equal opportunities in education, politics, and the workplace. Eriksen (2000:3) points out that "It is an express political goal, particularly in the Labor Party and the Socialist Left, that men and women are to have the same opportunities with regards to education and profession." Much value is placed on this equality. The issue that is not explored in literature yet is that of the lack of parental supervision at home, and the cost this has upon the emotional and psychological development of the children. The foreign women in Norway do not usually work full-time outside the home (as opposed to the majority of Norwegian women who do so), the children raised by foreign women experience a much different upbringing then that of Norwegian women. This is an issue that has not yet been studied in any depth.

Peggy Orenstein (2000:59) begins to address this gap in how gender influences the professional work life, and how it affects the decisions that women make regarding career and family. She presents through women's narratives the struggle they have to find a balance of home and work life, and how they feel marginalized by being responsible for both fields, and yet not completely validated by either. The repeating challenge she explores is the theme of power vs. powerlessness. This is further explored in Maathai Wangari's work (2006:143) with regards to gender and the transnational experience. Nuruddin Farah carries forth this idea in terms of gender and powerlessness (2007:178) in the context of home versus living in exile. This construct is useful when investigating ideas of gender, work, sex and power.

Issues of home and of raising a family are addressed several decades ago in Malinowski's work. He writes (1945:19), "we all know that 'family life' means for us, first and foremost, the atmosphere of home, all the innumerable small acts and attentions in

which are expressed the affection, the mutual interest, the little preferences, and the little antipathies which constitute intimacy." This is relevant when exploring issues of sexuality and family life in Norway. Eriksen writes (2000:3) "Marriage is based on a free choice of partner and most people consider it acceptable for couples to live together without being married. Serial monogamy and the changing of partners after a number of years is widespread." Based on the research at hand, these sentiments are drastically different than those of most of the women who come to Norway, who believe that one should be married before having children, and that monogamous commitment to one's marriage is necessary. In many countries outside of Norway, women stay at home and have the main responsibility for the housework as well as the upbringing of the children.

The lack of commitment to monogamy in a marriage is a surprising thing to learn of once the women move to Norway. They often first encounter this practice when joining an organization's Christmas party in a mountain hotel, or while on business trips abroad. Clifford Geertz (1975:453) writes of the importance of the small facts speaking to large issues in life representing slices of an important whole; that it is the many small things that offer a vision of what is important to a people, to a culture.

This issue of sexuality in Scandinavian culture is one that has experienced a great flux in the past 50 years. Traditionally, until the early 1960's, this region has been governed in terms of social behavior by the religious Lutheran values that permeated the society. Gullestad writes (2007:3) of one way in which the pervasive Lutheran faith has shaped both Norway and the rest of the developing world when she points out that "Norway has sent out more missionaries per capita than any other country." Berge Ragnar Furre, a Norwegian historian, minister and politician in the Socialist Left Party (and a

member of the Nobel committee) believes (2008:8) "You have to remember that here in Norway we have also had a strong tradition of liberal democracy that is against sexuality, so we are historically divided as a liberal society." There is currently a chasm between a puritanical past, and a sexually liberal present. Interestingly, the trend now is back towards more modest traditions. While it has been normal and very common to see women topless at the beaches, or at the large public parks sunbathing, now it is very seldom (2008:8). University of Oslo's women's studies professor Wencke Muhleisen (2008:8) believes that this is due to the fact that "feminism in Norway has turned against sexuality and towards the family, the winning political line cooperating with the state in looking for equality laws that meant a gradual cleansing of sexual promiscuity." So while there is still "looseness" in terms of exchanging sexual partners while intoxicated at business functions, or after a night out at clubs, there is simultaneously a questioning of the direction that the culture wants to take.

Parents today in Scandinavia are not as quick to bath nude with their families as they were a decade ago (2008:8). This is due to the fact that the nude body has become more sexualized now, and less "natural." Muhleisen believes that "The commercial ideal body has replaced the de-sexualized healthy body." So, wearing the tops at beaches for women is less a renunciation of liberal freedom, but a newfound awareness of the fact that the rest of the world tends to view naked breasts as a sexual symbol. There is an increasing awareness as well that the "rest of the world" is coming (in a very small way) to Norway, with multicultural neighborhoods (in the Grünneløkka, the "Soho" of Oslo) providing a semblance of a multi-ethnic community. The women in these areas are especially unlikely to sunbathe topless in the local parks (such as Toftes Parken, in Grünneløkka)—both

because the marginal Muslim immigrant population in these areas takes offense, and because they are aware that they are being stared at.

The influx of refugees and foreigners into Oslo is also affecting the Norwegian psyche in a strange way with regards to sexuality and commerce—that there is a belief now that native prostitutes are cleaner and more law-abiding. While there is no change in how prostitution in general is viewed (it is legal in Norway to sell your own body for money, but not for someone else (i.e., a pimp) to sell it for you, or have control over your body as a commercial entity), there is an awareness now of more Norwegian women entering into prostitution (as opposed to Eastern European refugees and immigrants), and the society is happy to see even this last outpost of acceptable commercialism being provided by "real Norwegians." Muhleisen (2008:8) concludes that this is a good thing, as it prompts a "whole new discussion about good Norwegian sexuality—which, this being Scandinavia, includes equal rights for women—has arisen in contrast to bad sexuality, which is now the sexuality of the 'other.'" Havard Nilsen, the Norwegian historian, notes that (2008:8):

> There has always been a moral high-mindedness here about sexuality, connected, like the labor movement and teetotaling, with issues of reform and salvation. It used to be that even prominent actors in Scandinavia acted in pornographic movies because it was socially acceptable here, being linked to liberal politics.

What keeps these drastic swings in cultural identity—from religious Lutheran to sexually liberal—is that they are done as a group, as a whole. This sense of shift occurred within a unifying construct, and in that way, immerged intact as furthering the homogeneous nature of Nordic society. The homogeneous nature of Norwegian culture is a driving force in how it views itself as well as in how it (as a unified entity) views the rest of the world. The next section of the literature review focuses on this issue as it shapes

how Norwegian culture interacts with other peoples both within its borders and with the outside world.

Homogeneity as Primary Social Influencing Factor

Gullestad explores in much of her writing the connection between Norway as a homogeneous culture and its fear of the other. She found in her studies (1996:24) that throughout Norway, there was a culture of "shared sameness." She posits that the culture of Norway derives from its Lutheran past, but has merged into a contemporary one that views "equality as sameness" (1992:21). The body of literature that comes from her studies on this topic forms the basis for much of contemporary Norwegian anthropology. In "The Art of Social Relations" she discusses (1992:6) the "relationship between Lutheran religion and secularized everyday life in Norway, exploring values such as the home, peace and quiet, independence, equality as sameness (imagined sameness), wholeness, nature and safety/security (*trygghet*)," and concludes that this view of themselves as a unified whole is still what drives the culture forward today (2006:35). She believes that while what is acceptable in contemporary Norwegian culture might be quite different from what was acceptable 30 years ago, there is no less division of beliefs and values present in the society-at-large. She argues (2007:5) that:

> There is currently a popular reinforcement of the ethnic dimensions of majority nationalism, with a focus on common culture, ancestry and origin. In particular, the national imagined sameness rests on the metaphor of the nation as a family writ large. Often majority people do not seem to be able to relate to those with a minority background in terms of degrees and modes of diversity and sameness but only in terms of polarized categories. It is as though an outsider must be found in order for the internal sameness, unity, and sense of belonging to be confirmed. 'Immigrants' are asked to 'become Norwegian' at the same time as it is often tacitly assumed that this is something they never can really achieve.

There is little separation of national identity and State policy or religion. Gullestad points out that (2007:5):

> History, descent, religion and morality are intertwined in this form of nationalism, ethnicizing the state as an expression of collective identity. What seems to be at stake for many majority Norwegians is not so much a threat from the new minorities as socio-economic competitors but a threat to the imagined moral community and the Norwegian welfare state as the incarnation of this community.

Gullestad speaks of the need for Norwegians to embrace the minorities within their midst, and to change the paradigm of what is possible for them in terms of Norwegian identity. She argues that in order for outsiders in Norway to truly "belong" in Norway, the society must re-define itself. She does not give any direction for how this should unfold, but continues to urge her countrymen to develop a more inclusive national identity. She writes (2007:5):

> Minority people who do not play down their difference are perceived as provoking hostility, and thus threaten widespread narratives about Norway as an innocent, homogeneous, tolerant, anti-racist, and peace-loving society. The ideas of sameness based on generalized kinship permeates**….**the focus on imagined sameness in terms of common descent and cultural sameness makes up a invisible barrier to the acceptance of newcomers as unmarked citizens who belong.

She sees minorities in Norway as one day belonging to the Norwegian cultural landscape, but only if the present culture chooses to let the narratives of foreigners exist within the vocabulary of a true, multi-ethnic Norwegian community. In writing about the current "two pronged" communities in Oslo (that of Norwegians, and that of the foreigners), both Gullestad and Eriksen's arguments present a picture of an extremely homogenous culture. The only other place in which cultural identity is equally one-dimensional is Japan. Ruth Benedict's early works regarding this culture in light of identity provide further clarification concerning homogeneous societies.

Benedict works (1934; 1946) offer a solid basis for delving into cultural understanding. She continues with Malinowski's work with regards to his great work detailing portraits of cultures within their context. But she takes this one step further, building upon the idea of cultural studies as embracing psychological importance. She brings in the ideas of Nietzsche and *Gestalt* psychology as a part of understanding and addressing the need for wholeness and integration with regards to understanding culture. She writes (1934:3) "There is no social problem it is more incumbent upon us to understand than this of the role of custom." And because Norwegian culture has only a relatively recent tradition of exploring culture in a self-reflective way, her framework is an excellent guiding force. Benedict's beliefs in Apollonian and Dionysian ideals present within cultures offers an appropriate lens in which to view the opposing constructs of Norwegian and foreign cultures. In ultimately reaching new understandings with regards to the interaction of these two groups in the most intimate of relationships, her work in this field is helpful. She writes (1934:278) "[a]s soon as the new opinion is embraced as customary belief, it will be another trusted bulwark of the good life. We shall arrive then at a more realistic social faith, accepting as grounds of hope and as new bases for tolerance the coexisting and equally valid patterns of life which mankind has created for itself from the raw materials of existence."

Benedict offers observations and reflections concerning the indelible uniqueness of a homogeneous culture. And while the culture focused upon in this particular work is Japan, due to its extreme homogeneity, it shares many unexpected similarities with Norway. They are the two more homogeneous lands in existence. And this is how they have always been.

So in this way, they offer rich opportunities for observing a mainland culture in a pure state.

She argues (1946:229) that a culture in which the group or "whole" of society is viewed as more important than the individual creates a cohesiveness that permeates most sectors of daily life. And that this unique social dynamic elevates daily life rituals into actions that merge the individual's choices into physical manifestations of belonging to the greater whole of society. She also argues that in order to understand Japanese culture, one must begin with letting go of Western notions of individuality as the best framework for a society. For in this case, it is the State that holds the power. She makes clear (1946:64) that it is the interplay between equality and State that define how the Japanese view themselves:

> Japan's confidence in hierarchy is basic in her whole notion of man's relation to the State and it is only by describing some of their national institutions like the family, the State, religious and economic life that it is possible for us to understand their view of life.

This is similar to how the Norwegians view their State as the basis for their culture as well—that they are also unified by a State religion, being of the same racial background, having shared values as an egalitarian society.

Sacrifice and self-discipline (1946:233) are the cornerstones of Japanese consciousness—that the individual must bend to further the will of the group. Benedict writes (1946:315) that "Having paid so high a price, they became self-righteous and have been contemptuous of people with a less demanding ethic." She argues that this will need to change in order for the Japanese to emerge as a voice that is heard in a post-WWII existence. But she also writes that in order for the world to value the voice that comes forth from the Japanese, they must be willing to include others into their society. And because

this is such a foreign and distasteful idea to the Japanese, that this exclusion of outsiders will be a pivotal factor in both maintaining their existing national identity, and in holding them back from a greater world scene. She writes (1945:315) "that they hope for a new growth of freedom among their countrymen: freedom from fear of the criticism and ostracism of 'the world'." She believes that they must first start to include variations of behavior and traditions within their own culture before they can authentically include outsiders and foreigners into their fold.

This is a concept paralleled in Gullestad's work (2007:1), when she writes of how Norwegians have finally learned to include their native people (the Sami) into the culture, and done away with most of the prejudices and racism shown towards these people. And in this way, she believes (2007:5) that Norwegians are ready to learn to be more inclusive towards accepting foreigners into their world. Gullestad believes (2007:1) that in learning to understand different cultures from an anthropological perspective that the work of Clifford Geertz provides a rich and insightful trove from which to draw upon.

Transcultural Understanding

Clifford Geertz asserts (1973; 1988) that while observing a culture in a dedicated way is necessary for gaining true understanding, so is the absolute experience of understanding created by a knowledge that transcends science alone. Addressing emotions, ideas and values as cultural products (1973:50) he offers a framework embracing both spectrums of the Platonic ideal to the Aristotelian form as a place to understand culture. This is shown in his belief that:

> to look at the symbolic dimensions of social action—art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, common sense—is not to turn away from the existential dilemmas of life for some empyrean realm of de-emotionalized forms; it is to plunge into the midst of them. The essential

> vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said (1973:30).

His work (1973:92) on nationalism, ideology, politics as integral to the shaping of a culture, in as much as inherited emotional behavior is innate, lends itself appropriately to Norwegian culture—as it is a culture that has been preserved in many ways from its original, ancient form. It is a culture that both reveres and strongly reflects its Viking heritage. This vein of observation of culture may be observed in a deeper, metaphysical way by Claude Levi-Strauss, as he includes the power of the spiritual within the boundaries of his experience. In addition, he offers strength with regards to personal transformation as a part of the process in learning authentically about culture—for the culture at hand is not only observed, but the observer must interact and will thus be moved by the experience in some form or another. This is in congruence with Ruth Benedict's emphatic belief that one must experience the culture first-hand (if not be actually being there, than by immersion with individuals from that culture).

In Levi-Strauss's Tristes Tropiques (1955:58), he asserts that the journey into another culture will include surprises, tests and revelations. In short, that the journey of exploring another culture equates to a true Quest (1973: 347), with the identity of the explorer being inexorably changed by the experience. This is true with regards to an outsider observing Norwegian culture. For though it is foreign, in order to understand it, one must soak some of it up in one's soul, much as Levi-Strauss experiences throughout Tristes Tropiques. In this work, Levi-Strauss writes of how one can become an integral part of a milieu by inheriting (or soaking up, in a sense) the very traditions one lives

amidst. In this way, these traditions become a part of one's present and future interpretation of self.

In exploring the necessity of learning to understand other cultures, Geertz (1973:22) argues that such immersion into other worlds offers information that is relevant to everyone. He believes that in learning about another world, that there is the capacity for understanding better the very world one is in. He writes (1973:23) that learning about these other cultures "makes it possible to think not only realistically and concretely *about* them, but, what is more important, creatively and imaginatively *with* them." He believes that including outsiders and their traditions into mainstream society allows the entire community to benefit (1973:50). He writes (1973:50), "Our ideas, our values, our acts, even our emotions, are, like our nervous system itself, cultural products—products manufactured, indeed, out of tendencies, capacities, and dispositions with which we were born, but manufactured nonetheless." He carries this belief one step further, arguing (1973:51) that man is a "cultural artifact", a kind of living architecture that embodies traditions, beliefs and yearning for the divine, for a kind of lasting greatness.

Geertz believes (1973:361) that "human thought it consummately social", and thus can change and evolve. And that the traditions of a people will shift as they broaden to include outside rituals and understanding. He writes of the need to study culture and narrative in order to understand oneself. He believes (1973:453) in comparing the beliefs of different cultures that a kind of "reciprocal relief" develops. He concludes that collecting narratives is a rich way in which to learn about other cultures (1973:452):

> The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong. There are enormous difficulties in such an enterprise, methodological pitfalls to make a Freudian quake… but at least to open up the possibility of an

> analysis which attends to their substance rather than to reductive formulas professing to account for them.

In opening up new worlds through the melting away of cross-cultural boundaries, there is a space created for understanding others. Critical hermeneutics provides a place to bridge the abyss between "us" and "them" with regards to transcultural studies. Herda writes (2007:18):

> Put another way, as development practitioners, we invoke the mode of the 'kingdom of as if' (Ricoeur 1984:64), calling upon the power of "us" and "them" to project a world through narrative configuration that enable each to know who we are in relationship to the other. On the basis of such relationships, we work toward the creation of projects and policies which when carried out will give people enough hope to live "as if" it is a worthwhile life.

Culture change is a pivotal element that the research participants experience. Works relevant to this phenomenon contribute understanding to issues of identity and belonging. Stewart (2004:12) makes the case that in order to understand one's own culture, one must first become an outsider. His ethnographic study of Afghanistan through narrative offers a view into a world governed by ancient associations and allegiances and timeless traditions. Into a place in which one's ancestral family tree decides who one should embrace. Where the boundaries of religion, gender, family and community are seamless. This is further supported by Ali (2007:199) with her study of moving from the Muslim world into a Western European world. She writes (2007:230) that before her escape to the Netherlands (and her complete immersion into Western culture), that she could not "imagine a moral framework for humanity that could exist that wasn't religious." In her case study of a young Laotian girl suffering from severe epilepsy, Fadiman writes of the severe miscommunication between the American medical system and the Laos families. Fadiman argues (1997:ix) that there needs to be a "common language" developed from the

foreigners who move to a new land, and those who already exist in this land. While in this case, the emigrants are from Laos, and their doctors are American, she makes a strong case for a language to be one of solicitation and understanding. That a common ground born from a willingness to learn of the traditions of the "other" is key to building an authentic community of inclusion.

Mortenson supports this premise in his ethnographical quest geared towards helping the West understand Afghanistan. He argues (2006:110) that one must become immersed in the life of "others" before one can learn how to provide meaningful help. And that any assistance given to foreign cultures should be in the spirit of authenticity and covert meaning. That it is in this way that relationships between cultures may flourish. This is reinforced in Joan Acecella's work (2007:xviii,312) which addresses the shifts in identity change as experienced by renown artists around the world. The change that artists undergo in shifting cultural worlds is explored in Matthew Piepenburg's work (2007:216), which offers insight especially with regards to cross-cultural understanding, and broadening the space between one's comfortable country of origin versus the unknown of new lands. Thomas Friedman's work (2007:8) explores the bridge between cultures, and challenges the idea that cultures are even now separate from one another. He argues that there is a melding of cultures that is occurring and explores how this will affect the identity of individuals as well as entire communities and countries. Azadeh Moaveni (2009:315) provides an interesting counterpoint for this view when she writes of Eastern and Western divides as becoming increasingly insurmountable due to religious and ideological conflict. She explores how this impacts women as well as both individual and communal identity.

The Swedish linguist and anthropologist Helena Norberg-Hodge writes (1992:225) that there needs to be a "reweaving of the fabric of place-based culture." She believes that understanding our cultural identity is the key for maintaining who we are in the world, and how we see our role in our society. She argues that economic development and progress are terms that must be re-evaluated in light of their impact and often negative legacy. Norberg-Hodge believes that one must live within a foreign culture in order to understand fully the imprint that modernization upon a native culture can have, and how a lack of preserving ancient traditions erodes more than just a single community. In her organization "Learning from Ladakh Project" Westerners come to this region of the Himalayas to work during harvest season with the local communities there. They learn and experience firsthand how preserving traditional culture is paramount to the continuation of ancient wisdom. In the above-mentioned works, issues relating to native cultures, traditions and the broadening world of globalization provide a grounding for understanding culture change.

As shown in the first part of this review of literature, the paradigm of Norwegian culture has been one of homogeneous liberalism. The works explored in this section pertained to identity, nationhood and gender. The issues of us and them are central to the exploration of these constructs.

Contemporary Norwegian anthropologists provided works which pertain specifically to the topics at hand. Thomas Hylland Eriksen provides the valuable and necessary backbone of the Norwegian anthropological perspective in both his journal publications, as well as his work concerning ethnicity and complexity within Norwegian culture. In the study *Typisk Norsk. Essays om kulturen I Norge* (Typically Norwegian: Essays on Culture

in Norway) (1993), he includes social theory, ideology and policy as relating to Norwegian culture and identity, and the phenomena of increasing globalization occurring within a previously homogeneous culture. He addresses how this dramatic change is creating both a shift and a chasm within the culture-at-large. His work in this vein is continued with the more recent works of *Røtter og Føtter. Identitet i Omskriftelige Tid* (Roots and Feet: Identity in a Turbulent Era) (2004). His colleague, Marianne Gullestad's works, The Art of Social Relations: Essays on Culture, Social Action and Everyday life in Modern Norway (1992) as well as *Det Norse Sett med Nye Øyne* (Norwegianness in a New Perspective) (2002) offers both pertinent ethnographical insights, as well as observations of how social action within the Norwegian context is being challenged by the foreign influx of outsiders. Gullestad's observations of contemporary Norwegian society relate specifically to issues that arise when writing about Norway as an insider.

These works were further grounded in anthropological understanding by the research of Clifford Geertz, Ruth Benedict and Bronislaw Malinowski. The second section of the literature review focuses on critical hermeneutics as a framework for which to understand culture change and identity with regards to the ethical inclusion of "others."

Critical Hermeneutics

In the following section, concepts from critical hermeneutic theory which are relevant to the topic at hand are described. This literature draws from the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Richard Kearny, Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger. This critical hermeneutic literature provides a theoretical opening in which to explore the categories of identity, solicitude and imagination, with regards to the dramatic culture change and shifts in identity that foreign women in Norway undergo.

Identity

Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur each have explored the themes surrounding identity, selfhood and meaningful belonging. With Gadamer, this exploration utilizes the theme of language as a method for which to explore identity. Ricoeur takes this quest one step further, focusing on exploring the shifts that identity takes through his theory of narrative identity. That narrative identity comes fully forth through the interchange of narrative and fiction—and that in the midst of these two constructs lays a merged truth. Ricoeur writes (1991:432), "a life is no more than a biological phenomenon as long as it is not interpreted. And in this interpretation fiction plays a considerable, mediating role…the mixture of doing and undergoing, of action and suffering which makes up the very texture of life." That central to answering the question of "who are we?" lays a necessary process of self-interpretation.

This process of self-interpretation can be explored through the tri-fold process of mimesis. The pre-understandings and past experiences are what constitute $mimesis_1$. These pre-understandings are brought into the present in $mimesis_2$. With $mimesis_3$ there is the place in the future for new possibilities to unfold. As the stories unfold, are told and retold, there is an emergence of new narratives. This kind of interaction is captured in Ricoeur's idea of *poiesis*, or creation/construction. The new possibilities that transnational women can imagine are influenced by this process of *poiesis*. By the act of telling their stories, of reflecting upon their meaning, and of imagining new possibilities for themselves in a Norwegian world, *poeisis* functions as a way in which new directions can be imagined.

An integral element in narrative theory is that is *idem* and *ipse*. Ricoeur writes (1992:149) that the dialectic between *idem* and *ipse* provides a frame in which narratives

can "be reinterpreted as exposing selfhood by taking away the support of sameness." One of the final objectives of the narrative theory is that of self-understanding (1992:161). With this process of mimesis, self understanding emerges in relation to the greater community (or, other), as well as to self. This is furthered by emplotment, (Ricoeur 1984:168) "which brings about the transition between narrating and explanation." For it is emplotment which embraces the inclusion of new narratives into the fold, and encourages the process of revisiting emerging narratives. It also is the place in which the self and other find commonality; for there is no self without the other. This is carried out through *phronesis*, the element of social wisdom that one brings to their stories. *Praxis* provides a counterpoint for this idea, in that it is concerned with practical wisdom. Ricoeur finds that both of these elements are a part of the process of narrative identity with regards to self-hood and other.

Ricoeur writes that in bringing witness to our stories (through a written narrative) one opens up to the "potentialities of the present" (1981:295). He writes (1981:90) of the importance of this mediation between "belonging" and "alienation" as a cornerstone of how one situates oneself culturally and historically. He argues that this continual re-interpretation of the self (1981:93):

> signifies that the mode of being of the world opened up by the text is the mode of the possible, or better of the power-to-be therein resides the subversive force of the imaginary. The paradox of poetic reference consists precisely in the fact that reality is redescribed only insofar as discourse is raised to fiction.

Ricoeur believes that in committing these narratives to the written page, that (1981:294) "our historicity is brought to language," furthering the important interplay of history and fiction. This follows Hans-Georg Gadamer's premise of 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontverschmelzung*). Ricoeur stresses that (1991:431):

> Mediation between man and the world is called *reference*: mediation between man and man is *communication*, mediation between man and himself is *self-understanding*. A literary work brings together these three dimensions of reference, communication, and self-understanding.

In framing this within Gadamer's concept of 'fusion of horizons', there is a grounding for understanding language as the central premise of how we see ourselves in the world, how we view our identity in terms of nationality, cultural belonging and community.

Gadamer argues that (1988:401) "languages are views of the world." That how we view our world is colored directly by the language that we use in our everyday interactions to communicate. He also believes that (1988:400) "However much one may adopt a foreign attitude of mind, one still does not forget one's own view of the world and of language." That in taking on another language, we take on another view of the world. That in this way one does not merely exchange one world for another, but adds layers of understanding to what one brings to one's current place in the world. That old languages and ways of seeing and understanding come forward with this new self, merging into a self that carries old traditions within its inherited memory. And that the contradictions between the old values, traditions and memories that we bring forth into our new world provide us with conflict, as well as with an expansion of our own horizons. In consciously addressing the challenges that these new horizons bring provides the greatest reward; for Gadamer believes (1988) "whoever has language 'has' the world."

Identity is a central concept that foreign women who move abroad must address in many ways. When one leaves one's native land and moves permanently into another country, one takes on a new identity. While at the same time, the old self (with all the existing memories, traditions, prejudices and beliefs) comes with the individual that changes cultures. This necessitates a merging of the two 'selves', a process and

development of selfhood that constantly shifts and evolves throughout the journey into this new identity. As this new self navigates through the relationships that come with this new language, land and society, there is a change in how relationships with others are undertaken. How we view ourselves in this new world colors how we interact with others. The pivotal moment of accepting the "move to Norway" played a role in how the research participants understood themselves, as well as how they interacted with others. Exploring the critical hermeneutic concept of solicitude guides an understanding of how we see ourselves in the world, as well how we see others.

Solicitude

In re-organizing oneself to participant socially in a new culture, one first accepts a shift in how one interacts with the world. In finding solid ground in which to create new friendships, one also learns to accept this aspects of oneself that are new or different. Bringing an ethical concern for others into play is central to the concept of solicitude, and this can only occur when one feels one is accepted. A relationship born of reciprocity and equality must emerge. This is the idea Ricoeur introduces with the notion of the "good life." When he writes (1992:193) that "Similitude is the fruit of the exchange between esteem for oneself and solicitude for others" he is acknowledging that unless one has respect for others, one cannot respect oneself. Conversely, unless one has respect for self, it is difficult to interact in a solicitous manner with others. So, in this manner, this is a construct central to the idea of identity.

Martin Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*, or "being-in-the-world" is central to the idea of caring for others. One must relate to others with a degree of care and understanding in order to reach the "good life" that Ricoeur write of. Heidegger writes (1962:237) that

"Being-in-the-world is essentially care…and Being with the Dasein-with of Others as we encounter it within-the-world could be taken as solicitude." That in reaching out to others in such a manner that we reach a kind of *Auflarung* (1981:66), or "enlightenment." This enlightenment becomes a part of how we interact with the world—neither a complete rejection of the nostalgia of our past, nor a complete denial of our prejudices. To a certain extent, Ricoeur believes that a putting aside of prejudices must occur in order for one to fully emerge into one's new self: "Prejudice is what must be put aside in order to think, in order to dare to think" (1981:66). And that it is the absence of judgment and prejudice which allow us to interact in an ethical manner with the world and with others. Carrying forth the concept of solicitude into the realm of imagination allows one's identity to transform from how we view ourselves in the world, to how we envision new worlds.

Imagination

Hannah Arendt's works focus on the elements of power, and the distribution of power. Her concentration upon these issues takes the idea of solicitude and merges it into the realm of imagination. She posits (1972:143) that "while one may undertake a kind of internal dialogue as a means for reflection and understanding that one can never fully discard the society's views-at-large either. For ultimately, there is an accountability that derives from one belonging to a specific community." Arendt believes (1972:140) that the power relationship between those who wield the power versus those who do not is clearly manifested in a just society as equality for all participants—that everyone should have an accepted voice that the society in order to create "just institutions." In interpreting a society that embraces an equal power sharing structure, that individuals and entire communities must utilize both solicitude and imagination.

The research participants all are forced to use their imagination in order to re-invent themselves within a new cultural context. Kearney writes (2002:6) that "the pain of loss and confusion…call[s] out for stories." This is relevant in the context of how the pivotal action of moving permanently from one country to another necessitates a harnessing of the imagination—the ability to transform what one was, into what one can be. That the timeless questions of (2002:7) "who are we? Where do we come from?" form the cornerstones of how we imagine ourselves transforming in the world. And that it is through narrative that we gather up the forces of fiction, imagination and identity to carve out of new niche is this world. Kearney believes that there is a middle ground that may be reached between angels and demons, or "saints and strangers." He suggests (2002:121)

> that philosophy might try to address such contemporary psychodramas of inclusion and exclusion, in America and elsewhere, by questioning dogmatic polarizations between US and THEM—that is, by challenging the binary opposition separating ourselves a 'saints' from others as 'strangers'.

That it is through this process of developing tolerance and gaining understanding of others that we learn to embody "just institutions" (1992:172) and to embrace the promise that a multicultural society can provide.

Kearney writes (2002:151) that without the act of storytelling that

> we would no longer possess that sense of narrative *identity* which provides us with a particular experience of *selfhood* indispensable to any kind of moral responsibility. Every moral agent must, after all, have some sense of self-identity which perdures over a lifetime of past, present and future—as well as over a communal history of predecessors, contemporaries and successors—if it is to be capable of making and keeping promises.

It is through the final step of imagination, encompassing both identity and solicitude that ethical action can emerge. This is the action that leads from alienating foreigners in Norway, to embracing outsiders and taking them into the fold of the greater community.

Summary

This Literature Review explores the issues of identity, Norwegian culture, and cross cultural understanding within a homogeneous setting. Included in this section is an overview of the anthropological theories used as a basis for creating a space for understanding foreign women as the "other" within a limited Norwegian context. Guided by the anthropologists' research in this section, groundwork has been set to delve deeper into the connections between identity, transnationalism and foreign women in Norway. Understanding of the issues at hand has been further supported by relevant theories within critical hermeneutics, which relate specifically to this research. With this two-pronged literature review, the context for this research is provided. Chapter Four, the proceeding chapter, describes the research protocol within a critical hermeneutic framework.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Introduction

Exploring cross-cultural identity has never been more important on a global level. It is a theme interwoven with past, current and future stories, one that will affect future generations in how they interact with other nations with regards to both nation-building as well as more personal and everyday interactions. This interplay of identity, crossing boundaries, time and distance affects multiple facets of global understanding. From the hotly debated issues surrounding gender, race and power, to the emergence of policies re-written to include outsiders.

This is a time in which the lines that have previously delineated identity must be re-written to include the unfolding dimensions of these crossed boundaries. With people travelling and moving between cultures in great numbers, there is a need now to understand and to listen to the stories that provide glimpses into the world of those who have changed cultures permanently. For these stories allow new worlds to emerge. They offer a rich trove of transcultural identity, part of which is in flux. They show worlds influenced by language, culture and history as a counter-balance for a static culture-at-large. In first hearing individual's stories, one can begin to understand the life of the other. With time and inclination, this understanding of the individual can merge into a willingness to see the world with new eyes. The narratives of foreign women in Norway allow a more nuanced spectrum of colors to come forth from the single palette of Norwegian culture; their stories imbue the horizon with new understandings of what is possible in terms of identity and culture change.

Using the research methods and protocols in Herda's work (1999: 85-138) these worlds are explored through a dynamic and meaningful hermeneutic orientation. Through conversations held with individuals experiencing varying degrees of cultural transition and flux, their stories are bought to light. The importance of understanding how and why identity shifts when a change of cultures is experienced is undergirded in this chapter by several steps. Through inviting participants to engage in meaningful conversations, exploring the topic at hand through a pilot study, collecting data, the ensuing data analysis, and identification of the participants, a new understanding about foreign women in Norway emerges.

As a theoretical framework for this research, the theories of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Richard Kearney and Hannah Arendt are explored. Their theories concerning issues of identity, solicitude and imagination provide the basis for the groundwork of the research proposed. While their philosophical concepts have been introduced in the literature review in light of their ontological importance in this research, in this chapter they are explored with regards to how they pertain to the data. It is in this way that the researcher undertakes to include hermeneutic traditions and philosophy into the research process.

Research Topic Focus

This research focuses on women who have moved to Norway from their home countries. There is little available research currently seen regarding women in trans-cultural settings. In this vein, gender plays an important role. These are women who have primarily moved to Norway to please their Norwegian partner, and the ensuing disparities

between power and sense of self play a large role in how these women function in a new, strange world.

Theoretical Framework: Research Orientation

Language as a View of the World

In shifting cultures permanently, there is a unique and intangible process that occurs. One relinquishes elements of who one was, while becoming steeped in the traditions and cultures of one's new world. There are several important ramifications of this process. For the culture that aims to absorb foreigners into it's midst, there is room here for understanding how a multi-ethnic dimension changes the fabric and flavor of the community-at-large. But this process must also acknowledge the reciprocal nature of this cultural exchange, and must offer the individual relinquishing traditions a place within the new host culture. In this case, the women who have moved to Norway must find their own place within the homogenous Norwegian context. In framing this concept, the hermeneutic theory of Gadamer provides an initial platform for exploration. Gadamer (1988:400) writes:

> However much one may adopt a foreign attitude of mind, one still does not forget one's own view of the world and of language. Rather the other world that we encounter is not only strange, but also different in its relations. It has not only its own truth in itself, but also its own truth for us.

This concept is useful later in exploring the connection between language and culture-change found within the data collected. As a newfound understanding of Norwegian culture provides the women who move there with a feeling of belonging, so too does their foothold upon their place of origin begin to fade.

While Gadamer (1988:399) credits Wilhelm von Humbolt as originating the idea of revealing "the significance of human languages as mirrors of the individual mentalities of nations" it is Gadamer's own ideas concerning language as a platform from which to view a broader horizon I explore. The very subject of language itself is a controversial issue in Norway. This is for several reasons: Norway's only recently gained independence (1905) fostered a need by its constituents to have linguistic independence from both countries that had dominated Norway historically (Denmark and Sweden). So, in constituting its own separate, but related language, there is almost an artificial construct being drawn. But however artificial this original construct may have been, creating a modern Norwegian language played a large part in allowing Norwegians to have their own sense of autonomous self as a distinct culture (from that of Denmark or Sweden). It is from the world view of the Norwegian language that Norwegians are able to view the world. Their language both protects them, as well as functioning as a barricade to the rest of the world.

As a homogenous country with a small population, speaking Norwegian (and having this uniquely insular view of the world) means that in effect, you are part of a select club. This strongly ties into the foreign women that adopt Norway as their country of residence. Gadamer writes (1988:400) "However much one may adopt a foreign attitude of mind, one still does not forget one's own view of the world and of language. Rather the other world that we encounter is not only strange, but also different in its relations. It has not only its own truth in itself, but also its own truth for us." So, while these women all learn Norwegian fluently, their view of the world is now neither fully that of their birth country, nor that of a Norwegian. And because this dilemma is unspoken but clearly felt by those in Norway, there is a shamefulness surrounding the very state of being an outsider.

Languages are indeed views of the world (1988:401), but because Norwegian society is so insular, neither outside views, beliefs or understandings are included into its cultural context. The horizon itself must change for Norwegians in order for them to see the outside world in a fuller light, and also in order for Norwegian society to include foreign entities into its fold. In Truth and Method, Gadamer writes (1988:271):

> The closed horizon that is supposed to enclose a culture is an abstraction. The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never utterly bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the part, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motions. It is not historical consciousness that first sets the surrounding horizon in motion. But in it this motion becomes aware of itself.

The literary, historical and social context in which Norwegians view themselves must shift in order to include new peoples into its borders. It is only then that tradition, authority and bias can evolve to include others, and create new spaces for social action.

By learning the language fluently, foreign women married to Norwegians learn to initially function on the outskirts of Norwegian society. These women believe that in mastering the language, they will be able to enter fully into the culture-at-large. They learn, after a few years, that while they might have gained a new vocabulary, they will not be granted "membership" into a culture in which they do not share original origin. In the "struggle to preserve their own relationship to the world, they extend and enrich it by the world of the foreign language. Whoever has language has the world" (1988:411). And while this may be true, a change in paradigm must occur within Norwegian culture if these women are to be granted the full meaning of these words.

Mimesis—Creating a New Paradigm

Ricoeur states in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences (1981:86) that "[s]elf reflection is the correlative concept of the interest in emancipation." This sets the stage for the idea that narratives from women living in Norway can offer both them and us (the readers) emancipation in understanding their stories. For these stories capture their journey, and must include both their past experiences, present reality, and future paths. In Ricoeur's theory of *mimesis* there is a framework for which to understand and analyze these narratives. As these women bring with them their language, culture and belief systems from their country of origin, and all of this functions as a lens from which they experience their present life in a foreign and un-embracing land. This in turn creates limiting future paths—unless a new paradigm is sought.

It is important to understand both the perspectives of the women who come to Norway, as well as to understand the forces that have shaped Norwegian culture into such an insular and unique place. Ricoeur writes (1981:295):

> The historical condition itself which demand that the historicity of human experience can be brought to language only as narrativity, and moreover that this narrativity itself can be articulated only by the crossed interplay of the two narrative modes [ontological and epistemological]…. The intimate involvement of the act of narrating in the historical experience itself may explain why the mutual interplay of two narrative genres and two referential modes is required in order to articulate this experience. It is only insofar as each narrative mode shares in some way the intentionality of the other that their references can cross upon historicity; and it in the exchange between history and fiction, between their opposed referential modes, that our historicity is brought to language.

It is through the exploration of narrative, within the appropriate context of unfolding history, that we may new horizons open up—to new possibilities that are created by new realities in our world.

Phronesis—Reinterpretation of the Good Life

Ricoeur's use of philosophy intersected with hermeneutics offers framework for viewing personal identity. This ties in with concepts of self and action. His embrace of Aristotle's concept of praxis offers validity to the roles of suffering and action as an impetus for proposing moral and ethical action as a new course of understanding. In Oneself as Another, he writes (1992:18) "The *autonomy* of self then will be tightly bound up with *solicitude* for one's neighbor and with *justice* for each individual." While "Gadamer claims that *phronesis* underlies all authentic understanding" (Herda 1999:5), Ricoeur sees this path as continuing with regards to ethical action and understanding of self. All of this is relevant to the necessary exploration of self-understanding that foreign women must undertake in order to find a hidden space within their confined new cultural home of Norway. He writes (1981:22) "attestation is fundamentally attestation of self. This trust will, in turn, be a trust in the power to say, in the power to do, in the power to recognize oneself as a character in a narrative, in the power, finally, to respond to accusation in the form of the accusative: 'It's me here'." It is only in seizing the ephemeral, affirming and psychologically challenging opportunity to view oneself in light of one's world that one's world view can change.

It is the act of examining personal narrative that can embrace and create new possibilities for *phronesis* (living the good life). As interpreted by Aristotle and Ricoeur, the idea of *phronesis* is embodied by seeking and creating just interactions with the world, in addition to just institutions in our society. Ricoeur also poses an especially relevant question with regards to insular, homogeneous

Norwegian society when he asks, "[b]ut what is selfhood, once it has lost the support of sameness?" (1992:150). Because Norwegian culture is so afraid of the unfamiliar, there is a fear that assimilation with the "other" will create a chasm between what is currently a tightly-held autonomous group.

Power in Common and Power of Domination

Richard Kearney and Hannah Arendt offer interpretations surrounding the theme of ethical action with regards to narrative imagination. Each offers profound insight as to the importance of creating narrative to function as a kind of discourse. In doing so, both the individual's history being captured in the written word is offered a kind of self-validation, and in a greater sense, there is possibility for communal understanding of the other, and of re-appropriation of history. It is through the telling and hearing of these stories that we can be opened up to the foreign world of the other.

Kearney writes (1996:182) that:

> a working-through (*Durcharbeitung*) of unintelligible and unbearable experiences until some narrative emerges by means of which the analysis can acknowledge its self-constancy in and through change… subjects, individual or communal, come to imagine and know themselves in the stories they tell about themselves.

This idea is continued in a darker light in Kearney's urging (2002) for one to acknowledge these typically unwanted beings into an accepted part of the communal unconscious. It is by bringing up our fears and allowing them to surface in the historical context of a personal narrative that we re-configure a rather nightmare triumvirate into a valid part of how we can view ourselves in the world. It creates space for embracing the dark part of our stories. This is an important context for foreign women to utilize when creating their own narrative.

For it underlines the very urgency and necessity of creating the narratives at all. It is in the act of creating these narratives that sense of self can be understood and reached within the world of life in Norway. Kearney writes (2002:182) that there is "the ethical importance of narrative self-identity" in order to come into self-knowledge. Most of the women who have moved to Norway because they have married a Norwegian are too afraid to delve into the murky waters of this kind of intimate narrative history. For it represents to them a chasm between their old life (with all the accepted habits and mores of their country of origin) with the strict adherence to the more limiting group-based rituals of Norway. It is often easier to leave this middle ground unexamined—though it is the very act of examining these narratives that can lead us to new understanding. Kearney emphasizes Ricoeur's theory of weaving together history and fiction through the use of prefiguration, configuration, and ultimately, refiguration of history (*mimesis* $_{1,2,3}$). Kearney poses the pivotal questions of "how much of the past should be remembered?" (1999:18). This underscores the dilemma of trying to let the past go, in order to embrace the future—as the foreign women in Norway see it. For they fear that if they remember too much of their "past life" that they will not be able to thrive in the more limited, darker world of Norway.

One way in which group-dominated dynamics can be understood is from Hannah Arendt's theory of examining" the gap separating *power in common* and *domination*" (1972:143). Because Arendt addresses just and ethical political institutions as a specifically important part of her research, this is helpful in viewing the situation in Norway. Norway is a country held together by most things being State sanctioned. When one takes vacation, receives medical aid, and free schooling—all of these are decided by State-run organizations. And while Norway takes great pains to insure that their

organizations are just, they view this through the narrow lens of a single people. The minute other skin colors, languages and values are bought into play, the balance of the just institutions is challenged in practice. In Arendt writes (1972:143) that "[p]ower corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual: it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together."

Traditionally, due to the extreme homogeneity of Norwegian culture, there was no outside challenge to its manner of keeping the political and social institutions limited to ethnic Norwegians. But with more foreigners making a permanent home in Norway, there needs to be a re-evaluation of how to allow these organizations to broaden to include voices of the "other". This requires a reciprocal dynamic, which Arendt illustrates when she writes (1972:140):

> What alone is important is the nonhierarchical and noninstrumental nature of the power relation: It is the people's support that binds power to the institutions of a country, and this support is but the continuation of the consent that brought the laws into existence to being with.

There is a requirement of equality in order for a sense of justice to prevail. This can be reached by envisioning oneself in the place of the other—in essence, being able to psychologically move beyond oneself. Being able to have a kind of 'enlarged mentality' is necessary to envision both the life of the other, as well as a communal life that includes the other. Arendt writes (1972:143):

> [t]he power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others, and the thinking process which is active in judging something is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement. From this potential agreement judgment derives its specific validity….It need the special presence of

> others 'in whose place' it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all.

Arendt's views focus on the political and social organizations, while Ricoeur's and Kearney's delve more into the realm of the personal. It is the synthesis of these theories (and others) that will provide a rich trove of research upon which to base the explorations of narratives offered by foreign women living in Norway.

Appropriation of Theory in the Research Design

Utilizing hermeneutic theory as the basis for analysis in this research offers the most insightful and flexible way in which to view a "life-world." Through conversations fixed in time and place, new understandings and a fusion of horizons can emerge. This creates space for both better comprehension of the issues explored, as well as an increased understanding of what needs yet to be changed to take this fusion of horizons into a place of action. As data are chronicled, transcribed and interpreted, both the researcher and participants come to understand their place in the world differently, and offer this as a lens with which to filter the new shared understandings of the Norwegian-centered transcultural experience.

Entrée to Research Participants

Almost all of the research participants still live in Norway, so this research was undertaken there. The conversation partners were contacted through email and through mutual contacts to arrange times, places and dates convenient for the participants. There were two trips scheduled to Norway to hold these conversations in person with the formal participants, and each trip lasted three weeks. During this time, the researcher collected

data through both conversations and field notes. The timeframe for this research spanned May 2008-November 2008.

There were seven formal participants that took part in this research, and these participants are listed in Appendix A. Consent forms were delivered to the participants upon the researcher's arrival in Norway. While the conversations each took on their own flavor and direction, guiding questions were provided to the participants a few days prior to our scheduled conversations.

The criterion for selection of participants was that they be women of non-Norwegian extraction, who have moved from their home country to settle permanently in Norway due to marriage with a Norwegian national. Conversations were conducted primarily in English and at a site of the participants choosing. A text of the conversations was created and given to the participants for correction, review and reflection. While each participant received a copy of the transcribed conversations, with a request to change anything that they felt was not correct or properly portrayed, none chose to make any changes, edits or modifications. Each participant engaged with the researcher to have two formal conversations. A final copy of the transcript was given to each participant.

Research Site

Research conversations took place in Norway, in various towns and cities depending upon the participant's needs and requests. They took place in private homes, on boats, and in summer cabins with no running water. The researcher endeavored to accommodate the participant's desires in where the exact location shall be. But as the focus of the research is greatly flavored and influenced by all that is Norwegian, the bulk of the formal

conversations were held in person, in Norway (using English as our formal conversation language).

Research Categories and Research Guidelines

The research conversation guides were provided to the research participants several days prior to our conversations, in order that those who preferred time to formulate their thoughts had the time needed for reflection. These guiding questions were offered in the context of seeking an authentic conversation concerning issues brought to the forefront by these questions, not in an effort to gain exact answers, and are shown here at the end of each category. New questions emerged as fresh perspectives were reached regarding the issues addressed by original discussions. I selected the following as categories for my research:

- Identity
- Solicitude
- Imagination

Category I: Identity

For the first category, Identity, the essence of the transcultural experience may be immediately delved into. The subject at hand is that of cultural change and shifting worlds. As one moves from all the traditions of one's birthplace into a new world, there is a melding of worlds that occurs, Gadamer phrases this a "fusion of horizons" Gadamer writes (1988:271) "Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion." It is within this context that there is constant possibility for re-defining oneself as one's horizons expand. Gadamer (1988:271) believes that "the horizon is, rather,

something into which we move and that moves with us." There is a need for an examination of how one's identity is fixed in the traditions that shaped one's formative developments and viewpoints versus how one changes with the pressures and influences of a new cultural world. In this case, the culture at hand is Norwegian culture. As the participants and focus of this study is on women, the role of gender must also be explored with regards to how identity shifts with marriage to a foreigner, a Norwegian national. And in how raising families within the context of a world the participants did not grow up in provides challenges seen, but not heard.

Bernstein (1983:144) writes that it "is through the fusion of horizons that we risk and test our prejudices. In this sense, learning from other forms of life and horizons is at the very same time coming to an understanding of ourselves." This offers a theoretical counterpoint for exploring the idea that one's prejudices do not disappear necessarily, but that they do change with the shifting of one's horizon. For we are not enclosed within our own horizons, just as we are not enclosed permanently within our own culture. Bernstein (1983:130) writes that "all reason functions *within* traditions." So conversely, when one's traditions change, so does one's reasoning change as well. Gadamer (1988:271) writes:

> When our historical consciousness places itself within historical horizons, this does not entail passing into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own, but together they constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness. It is, in fact, a single horizon that embraces everything contained in historical consciousness.

It is with this idea of exploring identity that I pose the following questions:

- How has your view of yourself and of the world changed by your experiences in Norway?

- How has your dream of how your life would be, taken on a different path since moving permanently to Norway?
- How much of yourself can you identify from your pre-Norway self? How do you view these changes—in what kind of light? When did you first begin to recognize this change?

Category II: Solicitude

A shared world, that of the foreign and the familiar can offer insight as to how one manifests caring for the Other: or caring for others through solicitude as a way of interacting with the world. In fully realizing solicitude one must explore the concept of *Dasein*, or being-in-the-world. Heidegger writes (1967:159), "Solicitude takes over for the Other that with which he is to concern himself…In such solicitude the Other can become one who is dominated and dependent, even if this domination is a tacit one and remains hidden from him." The Other in this situation becomes subjected to domination without even realizing their situation, and in this way, understanding one's whole story becomes important in creating an awareness to prevent such situations. So to fully engage Dasein, and the full circle of solicitude, it is helpful to begin with Ricoeur's idea of *mimesis*.

The concept of mimesis furthers this idea, with the premise of time itself as an integral part of creating and understanding one's story. The lens with which they now view themselves has changed, reflecting the alteration of their original viewpoint. The new understanding must take into account their previous world, the self that came from a different country (the world figured), and move into how they see themselves now within the context of their current world in Norway (the world configured). Ultimately, this shall

lead to how they hope be within their new world (the world refigured). In order to re-imagine oneself within a Norwegian world, the forces of distance, time and change must converge in order to create a new history. Shahida (2004:55) writes that "unless we reclaim, understand, and reinterpret our past, we can not create a new future." Ricoeur provides the basis for this when he writes that it is these empty spaces in between the past and the future in which we create new possibilities. He writes (1988:158) that "transforming, in the sense that a life examined in this way is a changed life, another life", offering the idea that it is through imagination and exploration of one's story that we may reconnect with each other and with our past.

It is through this sequence of the past examined and the future explored that one may re-interpret the meaning of the present. As Ricoeur (1981:86) writes, "Self-reflection is the correlative concept of the interest in emancipation." It is through the concept of mimesis that one may reach a kind of "circle of knowing". Ricour (1981:88) explains this when he writes "in the circle of understanding…is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing." Herda (1999:72) writes that "[o]ur past grounds us and gives us perspective." Ricoeur (in Kearney 1984:21) writes of this as well: "I believe we must have a sense of the meaningfulness of the past if our projections into the future are to be more than empty utopias." In connecting the past with the future, the following questions shall be addressed in light of the research topic:

- Looking back upon all your experience now, what do you believe are the keys to understanding Norway? If you had known all this, would you still have chosen to move?

- What words of wisdom, gained through your own lived experience would you offer to share with someone considering a move to Norway (or could share with someone who has recently moved there)?
- Is there any single element that would have made understanding your place in Norwegian culture more relevant—or made the shift to Norway a better experience for you?

Category III: Imagination

Imagination plays a pivotal role in how one understands oneself, one's community, and one's own history. The process of interpretation allows one to imagine how one can picture an altered world, and perhaps change the role one plays in this world. Through the intersection of history, text, and narrative identity one finds a place in which language reveals the individual's story as well as the collective sense of community. It is through open conversation that there is a space created for placing stories into text. And with the creation of this text, there becomes an open space in which the narrative has transcended belonging to the storyteller or the listener—it now belongs to the world. It is these spaces in-between that offer place for interpretation of the story unfolding—of the meaning of the story set in real-life experience. Gadamer (1983:162) writes that "[t]exts are 'permanently fixed expression of life' which have to be understood, and that means that one partner in the hermeneutical conversation, the text, is expressed only through the other partner, the interpreter." And because it is through language that people understand one another, Herda (1999:49) writes that it is though the language itself in narratives that "individuals [may] understand the spirit of a nation or a community." In through interpreting narratives, Shahida (2004:48) writes that "[w]e can only transform the world if we imagine the

importance of our interconnectedness with each other." By engaging the concept of imagination, explored through narratives, these stories may be exchanged, and we may change each other's lives.

Ricoeur writes of time playing a pivotal role in exploring narrative identity, and how one understands the past, as well as how one imagines the future. While Shahida (2004:34) believes that "concepts of time and narrative are abstract and infinite", it is Ricoeur who sets the stage for a fuller examination of the interweaving between these two themes. He writes (1992:125), "Consider memory as the retrospective expansion of reflection as far as it can extend in the past. By reason of this mutation of reflection into memory, 'sameness with itself' can be said to extend through time." This embraces the tri-fold theory of *mimesis*. Shahida clarifies this theory as essential as understanding and instituting reality. She writes that the first step:

> Involves interpretation of our past understanding (e.g., memory, history and traditions: $mimesis_1$); secondly, imagination creates our future ($mimesis_2$); and finally, the interplay between $mimesis_1$ and $mimesis_3$ creates the present ($mimesis_2$). In other words $mimesis_2$ is created through emplotment and configurations. It is through these stages and through narrating our stories that we turn our past experiences into realities and find the capacity to act in the present.

This circular movement is one of constant, endless unfolding. Ricoeur (1995:377) refers to this when he writes "The end point seems to lead back to the starting point or, worse, the end point seems anticipated in the starting point." Time then, is the binding force that gives our stories structure. For just as our lives must acknowledge the passing of time (in having a beginning, middle and end) so do narratives need the function of time to ground it in a certain place, meaning and context.

While time itself is does not often play a conscious role in one's narrative, it must be present as an underpinning of the story in order to provide the necessary boundaries. Traditions and expectations change over time. Just as individuals and entire communities change. And just as the needs of a society evolve, so does the understanding of one's own history, and the role that one played in creating that history. This includes the use of the very language that one uses to tell one's story. The language itself plays a role in creating the dynamic of time and place. Just as a period film may be instantly recognized by the viewer as set in a specific era and geographical location by the costumes the actors wear, so too does one's language reveal an entire world of belonging as revealed by the storyteller. It is through a synthesis of language, time and understanding of the self that a metaphysical exploration of time can unfold. Ricoeur (1988:105) writes:

> Calendar time is the first bridge constructed by historical practice between lived time and universal time… [A] third form of time…mythic time takes us back before this split, to a point in the problematic of time where it still embraces the totality of what we designate as, on the one hand, the world and, on the other hand, human existence.

Text may be transformed into action through this amalgamation of narrative and time—as this includes the elements of interpretation, understanding and reflection.

The final element of setting narrative within text in the fullest dimension possible is the inclusion of *idem* and *ipse*. For it is in understanding the double sided theory of identity as *sameness* versus identity of *selfhood*. Ricoeur sees this as a kind of necessary confrontation. It is in the space of this confrontation that identity emerges, albeit in a problematic manner. This discord is grounded when the narrative function of time enters the sphere. The intangible elements of memory and perception must include the fixed notion of time in order to drive forward the narrative. Ricoeur (1992:117) writes that the

conflict between idem and ipse "is not entirely dissipated unless we can posit, at the base of similitude and of the uninterrupted continuity, a principle of *permanence in time*." Ultimately, it is within this setting of time, selfhood and sameness that one may ask "Who am I?" (1992:118). In connecting oneself through narrative with the questions of time, *ipse* and *idem* one may explore the issue of identity. This must embrace the idea of the self changing through the above-mentioned concepts, as Ricoeur (1988:158) writes "[t]ransforming, in the sense that a life examined in this way is a changed life, another life." The following questions aimed at exploring the intermingling of these themes with regards to narrative identity:

- In telling the story of your life, what role would your moving to Norway play, and how would you set the current stage? How would you envision the opening scene and the closing act?
- If you could paint a different story of how you shifted into the Norwegian context, what would it include? How would it differ from your actual experience? Is there any single element that would have made understanding your place in Norwegian culture more relevant?
- In what ways do you feel that living in Norway has changed who you are, and how you view the world?

Research Conversation Participants

Each of the participants was chosen to be a part of this research due to what they could bring to the study, in addition to their willingness and open-mindedness towards the subject matter at hand. All seven participants are women from various parts of the world who had chosen to move permanently with their Norwegian husband to Norway. I felt it

was important to choose women who had lived in Norway a long time, as well as those who had not been there so long. I felt this variation in time (in addition to them being from different continents) could perhaps provide a broader view into the world of the transnational woman in Norway. In addition, an even more important factor in choosing these participants was that I find representatives from both the East and the West. Each of the participants offered an insightful view of their experience in Norway. And whether they were a woman of color, a Muslim, a Christian, a newcomer or an experienced ex-patriot, each offered a unique voice to the unified story that the chorus of their voices created together.

All of these women live within a 2 hour distance by train from Oslo, making it possible for me to visit with them in order to have conversations in person within the three weeks set aside for this research in Norway. They come from a varied background as well, offering different cultural perspectives on the research matter. Their varied educational backgrounds and economic status before moving to Norway will also provide a platform involving variation. Lastly, in holding conversations with women from both Western and non-Western countries, there is space for dialogue involving drastically differing ways of cultural interaction—including language, personal space, family dynamics and body language.

I have provided a brief background of each participant, with a more in depth introduction of each woman in the dissertation. Table 2 shows the country of origin of each participant, as well as the length of time they have been in Norway.

Becky Powell Hellum is 46 years old, a beautiful blond, blue eyed Southern Belle from Deep South in the U.S.A. She is glamorous, fashion conscious, and wouldn't be caught outside her house without pink lip gloss

on. She met her former Norwegian partner (they are now divorced) in Florida, and after a whirlwind romance lasting all of 3 months, she moved to Germany where he was in medical school. After one year in Cologne, Germany, they moved with their newborn daughter to Larvik, Norway, where she has lived since then. They had a second child, and eventually her husband decided that having an American wife was neither convenient nor desirable, and sued her for divorce. She must now stay in Norway if she wants to be near her children, as she cannot take her children to live outside of Norway (due to her ex-husband wanting them to stay in Norway).

Veronica Jørgensen is the eldest of my participants, and is approximately 69 years old. Originally from the Netherlands, she met her husband when she was 35, and because he worked around the world on ships, she was able to live abroad in many different places. They never had children, but created a rich life in Africa (for 4 years), in Brazil (for 2 years) and other countries. They moved back to Norway upon her husband's retirement 12 years ago, where she lives in the remote countryside outside of Sandefjord. Her husband has since become a devout Jehovah's Witness, and because she does not share this new-found faith of his, they lead quite separate lives.

Sophia Titer Larsen is quite glamorous, and hails from Montreal, Canada. She is of Haitian and Jamaican decent, and met her husband while in graduate school in Canada. The have two small children, which she now stays home to raise. She was previously an integral part of the Canadian Embassy in Norway, as their cultural coordinator and

representative within Norway. She later worked in the private business/oil sector in Oslo. Her husband is on the Norwegian National Rugby team, and they travel extensively with his work as an engineer. Her experience in Norway (as one who immediately found fulfilling, professional work) was a good counterpoint for many of the stories shared by the other participants. She offered as well the view of a transnational woman who could not visually blend in to the existing Norwegian population.

Ann Fields is from Great Britain, one of the original Vidal Sassoon hairdressers in the flagship London salon. She has two grown sons, and has worked for many years at the childcare facility at the local gym. She keeps busy during the long winters with quilting and sewing projects. She is talented in the "traditional homemakers" arts of needlework—she is able to turn mundane furniture into something fresh and beautiful using her talents involving fabric, thread and a sewing machine. This is much at odds with the simple, unadorned life she leads on the outskirts of a small Norwegian town. The contrast in her life now is quite dramatic from her earlier days in London. Her unadorned, natural gray hair is only one element of how far she has come from her other life in England. Her persona (now quite introverted) is also a powerful element of how she has changed to make Norwegian life more palatable. Her provocative thoughts on transnationalism, and on Norwegian culture with regards to women provide a very interesting lens for which to view the particular culture shift at hand.

Mary Andersen is a California girl (born in Santa Rosa, Ca.), very much a "free spirit" who runs a coffee shop/café in Åsgardstrand. She met and married her husband while working on a cruise ship. Her husband is away for 4 weeks at a time (he is the Chief Steward) at sea, and then home for 3 weeks. Mary's garden is extraordinary—she is a

homemaker par excellence, and keeps very busy in her tiny, seaside town (which is the birthplace of the great Norwegian Edvard Munch). Her ability to eloquently vocalize the complicated thoughts and feelings that women undergo as a part of the transnational experience makes her participation uniquely insightful.

Agneiszka Barbru is from the glamorous port city of Gdansk, Poland. She was a working attorney when she moved to Sandefjord to be with her Norwegian fiancé (whom she met in Poland). Since moving to Norway, she has worked primarily in the social welfare office, mostly as an office-worker. She has not used her legal knowledge in a professional capacity since moving to Norway. This vivacious, young (29) blond, glamorous woman tried for many years to have a baby, and the most exciting thing for her now is that she is currently pregnant with her second child. As this, more than anything has been her dream since moving to Norway—to have children, and raise a family. Because she has brought her Polish family with her to live in Norway, she provides an interesting glimpse into how one remains a part of two worlds, two identities—in an everyday kind of way.

Natasha Møe is a very petite and beautiful green-eyed young doctor from Teheran, Iran. She met her husband while they were both in medical school in Hungary and now she is a radiologist in Norway. She lives in her husband's hometown of Sandefjord, where he found a job working as a doctor upon their graduation from school. She is now pregnant with her third child, and is happy to finally be working in a Norwegian hospital (as it took several years of additional courses in Norway before Norway would acknowledge her medical degree). Being from the Middle East, it is interesting to have her unique perspective on change, identity and the shift into Norwegian culture.

Participants	Place of Origin	Length of Time in Norway
Becky Powell Hellum	North Carolina, U.S.A.	17 years
Veronica Jørgensen	The Netherlands	12 years
Sophia Titer Larsen	Québec, Canada	10 years
Anne Fields	United Kingdom	26 years
Mary Andersen	California, U.S.A.	20 years
Natasha Møe	Teheran, Iran	7 years
Agnieszka Barbru	Gdansk, Poland	9 years

Table 2: List of Participants

Data Collection, Presentation and Analysis

The collection, presentation and analysis of the data follows the protocol suggested by Herda (1999:85-128). The process used is one of participatory, field-based research using hermeneutics as the framework for understanding and interpretation. The steps involved in this process are as follows:

- Make a commitment to carry out field-based research, and then carefully chose a topic grounded in deep personal interest.
- Find participants deemed appropriate and knowledgeable in the subject at hand. Hold several conversations with each participant.
- Keep a journal to record written observations, notes and ideas throughout the research process. Include here the reflections, emotions, and thoughts experienced while undertaking the field research. Include photographs of the participants and of the relevant field research locations.
- Transcribe conversations between the researcher and the participants. This allows the conversations to transcend the brief time of physical conversation and interaction, in being able to give the text unlimited readings. The conversation becomes fixed in

time, and a narrative text begins to emerge. It is important for the researcher to be the one to actively transcribe these conversations, as it allows the researcher to reflect on what was said, discover new meanings, and experience the conversations from a different perspective (that of a listener, and not of a participant). In this way, further ideas for analysis emerge, and a new world of the text takes shape.

- Explore the background of the subject at hand (the country, culture, and existing literature) and in this way, allow a grounding of the research problem to take place. This provides a needed sense of appropriation, making the text one's own through distanciation. It allows also for an ethnographic perspective to emerge, creating an understanding of the participants' traditions and culture.

- Examine the themes through the theoretical framework of critical hermeneutics. This is the guiding force that furthers the next tasks.

- Support the analysis by developing themes, and placing these themes within categories. These themes shall be supported by quotes from the conversations drawn from the transcriptions.

- Themes and sub-themes within each category are developed. The participants' voices come forth and provide a cohesive meta-narrative in which to frame the research problem.

- The meta-narrative is explored from a theoretical perspective, further delving into critical hermeneutics as a basis for greater understanding.

- Implications are developed that emerge from the written conversations. An exploration of how these implications provide new insights and possible new directions for the research issue at hand takes place.

- Explore aspects arising from the study that merit further research.

- Add the researcher's own fusion of horizons with regards to exploring the research topic. Share the learning experiences gained through this entire process. Examine the role that this research plays within the researcher's own life.

Analysis of the data is guided by creative interpretation and by a critical hermeneutic framework. This melding of understandings exchanged between the participants and the researcher is furthered by multiple readings and interpretations of the data, and by the use of imagination in seeking out new possibilities for understanding the issues surrounding

transnationalism. The final outcome, regardless of what conclusions are reached about the data itself, is one of transformation, new understandings, and ethical action.

Pilot Field Study

A pilot study of this research topic was undertaken in December 2007 to explore the issues surrounding this research topic, and see if the questions were useful for the purpose of collecting data. A conversation was held with Mary Anderson on November 30th in Berkeley, California, where she was visiting from her home in Åsgardstrand, Norway. I had been introduced to Mary from a mutual American friend who also lives in Norway, but had never had the opportunity before to have a conversation that focused on the categories pertaining to this research.

Mary is an American who has lived in Åsgardstrand, Norway for 18 years and is married to a Norwegian. She has two children (age 14 and 18). Throughout the course of our conversation, we were able to address so many issues central to the questions explored in this study: I did my best to listen carefully to what she had to say regarding identity, language, survival in Norway, feelings about being an outsider and experiencing motherhood in a foreign country. She is extraordinarily candid and open with her thoughts, while clearly expressing conflicted duality being thrust between two sets of values—American vs. Norwegian. She is an artist, homemaker extraordinaire, and runs a café/gallery in Åsgardstrand. Her town is a small sea-side village, one that comes alive in the summer (with Norwegians spending time at their summer cabins there during the three week long State sanctioned summer break period), but is extremely quiet during the year. The fact that Mary has created a vibrant life in this village is testament to her tremendously agile and adaptable temperament.

I felt it was very important to address the concept of "home" in our discussion. Home in the sense of "where do I belong?" This is a much more layered concept then one might initially assume, as it is loaded both with all of the history of one's past, the current experiences of the participant, and the future that acknowledging and imagining can provide. With Mary, the turning point of belonging in Norway happened much more quickly then with more recent foreign women who have relocated to Norway. This had to do, in large part, with her absolute conviction that Norway was going to be her new home, no matter what. This kind of single-mindedness was a helpful coping mechanism in this case. When we spoke of home, Mary had much to say. She felt that she was:

> definitely now a combination of all three of my histories: my past growing up in the Bay Area, my wild and crazy days on the cruise ship, and my life as a wife and mother in Norway. But I do see this last part as the most important part of my life. This might be simply because it is the part I am living in right now. It is my most powerful reality. And it is what has tested me the most in so many ways. But I suppose it is only later on in my life when I will be able to look back at all these parts and see which one left the biggest imprint on my personality and on how I see the world.

Mary is quite thoughtful and well spoken when it comes to looking at her own life. I do not know that she fully realizes the strength so obvious in her character, but then, most of us cannot easily recognize our own strengths. Those seem to be more clearly seen when reflected in the eyes of someone we respect and admire. Because Mary's husband, Dag, works as a steward on a big ship at sea, he is often away (he spends four weeks at sea, and then is home for three). This is a typical rhythm for many of the foreign women married to sea-faring Norwegian men. But it leaves them even more alone then one with a partner who lives full-time with his family. In Mary's case, she likes this freedom. And also, she likes the dynamic both of having her own space (to create her own identity separate from that of her husbands), and of having a permanent partner only around part of the time. This

is because although he is gone, Mary still has the psychological comfort of all that a "husband" represents for foreign women. It is their entrée into a new world, their reason for exploring a new culture from the perspective creating a permanent home there (quite different from the viewpoint of one that is only living abroad temporarily). Mary says, "I like having my space…. It's the ideal marriage in many respects: I know he always comes home to me, but I get my freedom too." This feeling is strengthened by the conflict that Dag's drinking creates during the time he is at home. The entire dynamic of Mary's family life changes and things become more tumultuous. And because such heavy drinking is socially acceptable (and indeed, expected) at social functions, it is difficult to steer clear of. Mary says, "I wish they [Norwegians] could let loose without alcohol being such an issue…. They either need alcohol or someone to give them permission to behave in a different way from their everyday manner. This is a kind of passivity that seems to be a big part of who they are."

There are two issues addressed here, both the one concerning alcohol's powerful role in Norwegian culture, and also the issue of passivity as an excuse for many kinds of unflattering behavior. Mary acknowledges that "every foreign woman [I] know here has a partner with alcohol issues." It becomes an issue too large for these women (and my participant) to tackle. Groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous still carry great stigma, and because there is no escape from this issue, it becomes easier to just accept that it is the norm in Norway. Accepting new visions of normalcy is a large part of the change Mary had to undertake in order to make her life in Norway become psychologically her home. It means no longer asking "why" when customs and everyday traditions are so different, but just accepting that they are. When she says, "You don't ask why," she is reaffirming this.

In adapting to more Norwegian standards of social interaction, Mary learned that it was a hindrance to be outgoing and helpful, which her past life in California had always taught her was good. She learned to "stop reaching out to people," which while instinctively this felt unfriendly, she learned that it better reflected the natural behavior of the native people she was trying to blend in with. She learned that "when [her] behavior reflected the more closed Norwegian culture, that my life became easier." In this, one can see that the very "language" at hand here is less verbal, than it is expressed through action. In Mary's case, learning both sets of language, the verbal one as well as the one expressed through body language and facial expression, allowed her to understand her new culture in a way that would not otherwise be possible. But she is aware of the limitations that learning these language sets will have on other dimensions of her life. She says "When you put what is possible out of your mind, it is easier to accept the limitations of life in Norway." This cannot help but instill in me a kind of sadness. For although I understand firsthand how and why she feels this way, I believe this to be akin to a deliberate dulling of the soul. Mary herself expresses this same belief when she says "I do not think I will ever truly understand or like how such an inwardness of spirit in Norway creates a culture that is so cold."

What I learned from the Pilot Study

My conversation with Mary was transformational: through the initial shared orientation coming from the perspective of women who have experienced something in common (marriage to a Norwegian, and subsequently moving permanently to Norway), we found a place of understanding and solidarity with one another. From this shared time together emerged an authentic conversation. While the idea of researching how identity

shifts when one moves to a foreign country had been something I had been keen on exploring for many years, it was not until this formal conversation with Mary that I understood that how much room for this kind of research still exists in an academic setting. From this pilot study conversation regarding cross-cultural change, and how women evolve as they take on new traditions in which to raise their families, I learned that not only are the foreign women eager to explore this subject more formally with academics, but that they want their experiences to lead to something—to provide a platform for the greater society to change. I learned that my own experience in Norway was anything but unique, and that there was tremendous similarity in what foreign women experienced in moving permanently to Norway. I began to wonder about how the rest of the foreign women in Norway felt about these things—for if this one participant had given so much thought to the subjects we explored together, maybe there was an entire community who had equally thoughtful ideas on the same subjects. And that perhaps if these ideas could be harnessed in a positive way, that shifts in policy and attitude towards foreigners could begin to take place.

I thank Mary for her generosity of spirit in sharing with me her very personal insights and thoughts regarding her own experiences in Norway. This initial conversation provided me with the understanding that there is indeed much room for subsequent research conversations on this research topic. I found my categories and questions to be suitable for this study and did not need to change them. My professional and personal interests were confirmed through the course of exploring this research topic in a Pilot Study.

Research Timeline

The research timeline for this study was from May 2008-November 2008. During such time, several visits to the research site (Norway) were undertaken, and two conversations held with each participant. It is also during this time that all conversations were transcribed, categories discovered and data explored.

Research Journal

Throughout the period of research, a journal was kept by the researcher in order to create an immediate text of impressions, thoughts, quotations of participants and other important facts to note. This functioned as both a source of later reference by the researcher as well as a place in which pertinent information could be kept in written form, as a later text also immerged after the conversations with participants were transcribed. The research journal compliments and illuminates these later transcribed conversations by having firsthand observations chronicled in real time, within a day of unfolding.

Language

While I am fluent in the Norwegian language, and the participants all have some degree of competency in Norwegian as well, all conversations with the participants in Norway took place in English. While not all of the participants have English as their first or native language, it is a language they each had great proficiency in, and is also the language they had initially used during their courtship with their (now) Norwegian partner. The conversations with participants were transcribed as close as possible to the original utterance. I have kept small errors in grammar and word usage in the transcriptions, to help capture the individual flavor that each participant brought to our conversation. As someone who had also shifted from my native language into Norwegian while living in Norway, I

was sensitive to the expressions and word usages that tied into Norwegian syntax, and was accustomed to the variations in pronunciation. While most had become fluent in Norwegian after several years, for purposes of ease and continuity the language used in all conversations was English.

Background of Researcher

While I am a native of the Bay Area and have lived around the world, it is the experiences I had in adjusting myself to life in Norway that have held the most profound resonance in forming who I am today. My life before Norway was filled with academics, dance, performing and work within the business world, in the field of cross cultural communication. I believed, before I moved to Norway and married my Norwegian husband, that I could certainly segue at least one of these talents into a career within the Norwegian work culture. In addition to the usual feeling of dislocation one experiences when moving abroad, I quickly began to realize that more pervasive and uniform forces were evident in this change one must undergo to become accepted into Norwegian culture. I learned that I had to "re-package" myself so that I could become not only marketable in this new place, but so that I could take in the smallest of cultural details into my psyche in order to be accepted. For this was no usual place I discovered, but one that is homogenous, unforgiving, and much too small to burn bridges in. In addition, as a sports-based culture, with skiing as the national pastime, there was little emphasis or tradition in the performing arts present in Norway, and thus, my skills in that area were not going to be terribly useful. I realized that a total overhaul of who I am, and of how I define myself would be necessary. The greater discovery, I found later, was that most foreign women I encountered in Norway had had similar experiences in this regard. Because the process of changing ones mores,

beliefs and traditions is a gradual one, the journey of turning myself into a more Norwegian commodity was also a lengthy challenge.

The seven years I was married to a Norwegian were filled with many conversations regarding the difference in our two cultures. This, coupled with my own increasing understanding of Norwegian culture allowed me to gain new understanding of the world-at-large, as well as the community that I was becoming a part of. As my partner became more and more Norwegian (having moved back to Norway after seven years in the U.S.), he became less and less willing to have discussions about the diversity between Norway and the rest of the world, as he could only now view the outside world from a singular, Norwegian lens. I learned to look elsewhere to explore the phenomenon I was experiencing; one of edgy dislocation, permanent immersion into a foreign language, and a new view upon society, politics, gender, and identity. My own prejudices shifted and broadened, allowing me a new way of appropriating the world, and my own place within that world. I began to seek out others experiencing this same understanding, leading me to find other foreign women and engage in authentic conversation about issues that profoundly touched our lives.

The beginning of this process was directly influenced by my participation in a television program called "Migropolis", which was a bi-monthly state-wide shown public program that focused on the issues pertaining to foreigners living in Norway. One of the program's directors had heard of me from a mutual friend, and asked if I would participate in having a series of conversations with an interviewer on camera. I was initially flattered, but soon realized the weight of being a highly visible representative for foreign women to the Norwegian culture-at-large. My view was so Western, coming from such a privileged

background, how could anything I said be relevant to all the foreign women in Norway? How could I be a good representative of these women? I decided that I could only share my own story, as experienced by my own eyes, heart and mind. I told myself that if others happened to find solidarity or commonalities in this story, that it would be gratifying but that not necessary to validate my journey.

I discovered, as this segment was shown eight times across the entire country, that what I had to say did indeed ring true with so many foreign women. And even more importantly perhaps, was that it was of great interest to the native Norwegians who viewed this program. Many Norwegians shared with me that it was a kind of revelation to hear for themselves from someone who had experienced firsthand the issues that an outsider needed to address to become an accepted part of their culture. There seemed to be a tremendous willingness to explore this subject by Norwegians themselves, as many were increasingly encountering foreigners in their everyday life. Ironically, it was my husband at the time who had a greater reluctance for me to participate in this program. He was concerned that my Jewish background (which is a great anomaly in Norway) would make me a target of violence. He was worried about our home being shown, that in such a small town it would be easy to see exactly where we lived. And I think there was the underlying concern that my story would stamp us as being too "un-Norwegian" to allow us continued privilege as active participants in the upper echelons of Sandefjord society.

It was upon my divorce from my Norwegian partner, and my subsequent move back to my hometown in the U.S.A., that I was forced to more directly address the issue that prompted this research: where is home? When did home change for me? Where do I now belong? I could now look at these questions having come full-circle, back to my own

roots. And having the space from Norway itself allowed me to see its complexities with a clearer lens. It is examining these questions from a humanistic perspective that prompted me to begin this research in earnest. This, coupled with my desire to more deeply understand Norwegian culture and its unique perspective on the world will, I hope, provide insights regarding new narrative identity, inclusivity and understanding of the other.

Summary

Through the lens of critical hermeneutics, the theories of identity, solicitude and imagination provide the structure in exploring the narratives of foreign women in Norway. These theories illuminate a stage in which to view emergence of self, one that crosses the boundaries of time, place and space. Through an orientation provided by authentic conversation with regards to the above-mentioned constructs, there is space for an exploration of how and why a fusion of horizons emerges when one shifts from one culture to another. Through the process of interpretation and of shared conversations, the research of how foreign women in Norway create a space to exist emerges. And it is this research that can lead to reflections that become action, as stories must be told and reflected upon before the call to make changes can be heard. It is understood by the researcher that the focus group of this research is often clamoring for a voice to be heard within the Norwegian context. In offering questions and guidelines to frame our conversations and inspire ongoing dialogue, it is with the intent to provide a crescendo of intensity and of volume to play within Norwegian culture. This is with a hope that this great collective voice will carry beyond Norway's boundaries, and offer new songs to any country interested in hearing the silenced voice of the "other".

CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

I present the data in Chapter Five in the form of narratives. These are narratives that were shared with me by foreign women living in Norway who chose to participate in this research. These conversations were all held in Norway in Vestfold County (see Figure 3), with seven participants who came from various countries and had differing educational and racial backgrounds. They had lived in Norway for many years, ranging from 7 to 25 years. They all had worked in Norwegian society, experiencing both the professional side of being part of an organization in their adopted country, as well as being a part of a family within the Norwegian cultural context. Most have raised their children in Norway, while one participant does not have children.

An initial text was created from the transcripts of the conversations held with the participants. From this original text, a second text emerged in which I have more fully provided a detailed portrayal of the characters involved, the testimonies offered and the settings in which the conversations took place. Both of these texts are present in Chapter Five, and are a driving force behind the exploration of the research at hand.

The excitement that each participant reacted with when I initially asked if they would like to be a part of this research took me by surprise. There was little ambivalence, either about what they felt on subjects discussed, or about choosing to participate at all. If anything, there was merely the self-conscious concern that issues of culture- change and identity were such global issues, and therefore were they important enough people to share their perspective. Once I reassured them that their narratives, experiences and views of identity were indeed very important to share, they were unabashedly open and personal.

The transnational, expatriate experience is something rarely looked at with regards to women, so their views are especially important to now include in a greater global perspective.

On Norwegian Society

The lack of diversity within the Norwegian population is one of its most prevalent defining factors. It lends itself to a pervasive cohesiveness, while at the same time lacks any interest in being seen as multicultural. Having such a unified State with a singular national identity calls for an adherence to the standard of Norwegian cultural norms—an interesting kind of trade-off. It also means that there is little psychological space for foreigners to experience a natural kind of cultural melding: their own culture beings to fade in order to make space for the Norwegian mores and expectations to thrive. While this is perhaps natural in adjusting to any culture, what is explored here is the varying degrees of conflict that the participants in this research experienced in their personal shift into a more Norwegian identity. While such a homogenous culture creates limitations in many ways (which I will elaborate further upon in this chapter), it also creates a unique kind of cohesiveness. There is a kind of safety net created by the State dictating so many areas of cultural life (when to take vacation, what religion to belong to, working hours, to name just a few things). The social welfare system means that nobody is homeless, hungry or without basic medical care—and this is a powerful reason Norwegians feel both superior to the rest of the world, as well as content with their lifestyle. Perhaps they are just in this sentiment, as this is an extraordinary accomplishment. Albeit, one aided by both the unified, singular ethnic culture predominating, as well as the fact that it is an extremely wealthy nation with a very small population. And because they do have one of the best

social welfare systems in the world (one often lauded by both the international press as well as Non Governmental Organizations) it is understandable that Norwegian nationals feel superior to the rest of the world. They earn enough to live well, often own their own homes, and are frequently able to vacation in Southern Europe along the Mediterranean (going "*på siden*," or to the South, to get some sunlight and intense heat) during the winter months.

Throughout conversations with participants there were dominant themes that emerged. These included Norwegian culture, cultural duality, isolation, subjugation of self and transformation. Within these themes were the underlying notions of identity, solicitude and imagination.

What will be shared in this chapter is how the participants in this research view the existing cultural structure in Norway, and how they struggle to find their own place as outsiders in a country that prides itself in uniformity and homogeneity. And in this process, discover that they themselves have transformed into a self that embraces a cultural identity that is two-fold. This dual cultural belonging is at the crux of this research, and as such will undulate beneath the current of a steady re-interpretation of self, belonging and transnationalism as each participant adjusts more fully to life in Norway.

Cultural Duality; Great Expectations

> For being a foreigner…is a sort of lifelong pregnancy—a perpetual wait, a feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been an ordinary life, only to discover that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding—Jhumpa Lahiri (2003:49)

My first afternoon back in Sandefjord, and I am sitting at the hippest café in town, *Først Etage* (First Floor). It looks and feels exactly the same. Even the same servers behind the counter—amazing! Has nothing changed here? Has the ebb and flow of life

remained truly the same for everyone here while my own life since leaving Norway experienced such upheaval and renewal? I am so relieved—relieved that while there is a great pull of the familiar here, in a kind of twisted "Stockholm Syndrome" way, I no longer feel that I belong here. And this is the first visit in which this is the case. I glance around, adjusting to the constant stream of chirpy, musical, summertime-drunk Norwegian chatter all around me. The folks at the café, having an afternoon beer or a café latte are drunk with the dizzy joy of taking in the relentless sunshine. Much like the bees and wasps careening all around, trying to pollinate everything and everyone in such a short summer season. How nature reflects the culture here, I think to myself. Or is it the other way around? I am both hoping I see someone I know, and dreading it as well. For this is no longer my world, and I feel like an interloper, or a kind of failure at having not "made it all the way" as one that already had accepted that I was a "lifer" in Norway. Definitely conflicted, complicated emotions.

Then, I notice all the women in their 50s milling about, all with the same short, blond hair, with varying versions of the same ensemble: white shorts, sleeveless top with rhinestone designer label on the front (an unusual but trendy and popular display of status and money) and waterproof sport or sailing shoes. I am reminded of how there is a kind of Norwegian summer "uniform," one that includes as many name brands (such as Armani, Izod or Gucci): a focus on what is considered in fashion, rather than what is truly beautiful. And because there isn't much diverse fashion sense present, it becomes strangely monotonous. The ubiquitous sailing shoes are symbolic, even if you don't sail in Norway, you pretend you do—seems to be part of the D.N.A. here, from their Viking past perhaps. The younger women push huge prams throughout the streets, leaving them outside the

shops while they go inside to browse. For there is little violent crime here. And while petty theft is very common, nobody has yet thought to steal babies (unlike in so much of America, where children go missing all the time). Nobody wears black or dark colors in the summertime here, I'd forgotten. The teenagers are in miniscule shorts, or the tightest jeans possible, with teased blond hair that glows golden in the sun. They look like the proverbial sun-kissed dream of a James Bond goddess. I test the waters, and begin to smile at strangers, to see if maybe things have changed more than I think, and see if people will respond with a gentle smile back. But no, things have not changed much at all—no smiles are returned. Strangers not embraced. The refugee families (in this region, primarily from Kosovo and Iraq) mill about the main plaza, headscarves in place on all the women's heads, all with several small children in carriages. No Norwegian smile or interact with them either. I use this time to acclimate myself, and mentally prepare for the first conversation I am soon to have. Figure 3 provides an outline of the major cities in Vestfold County, with the participants living in the popular cities of Sandefjord, Larvik and Oslo (not on this map, but the capital city of Norway, 1 ½ hour north of Vestfold).

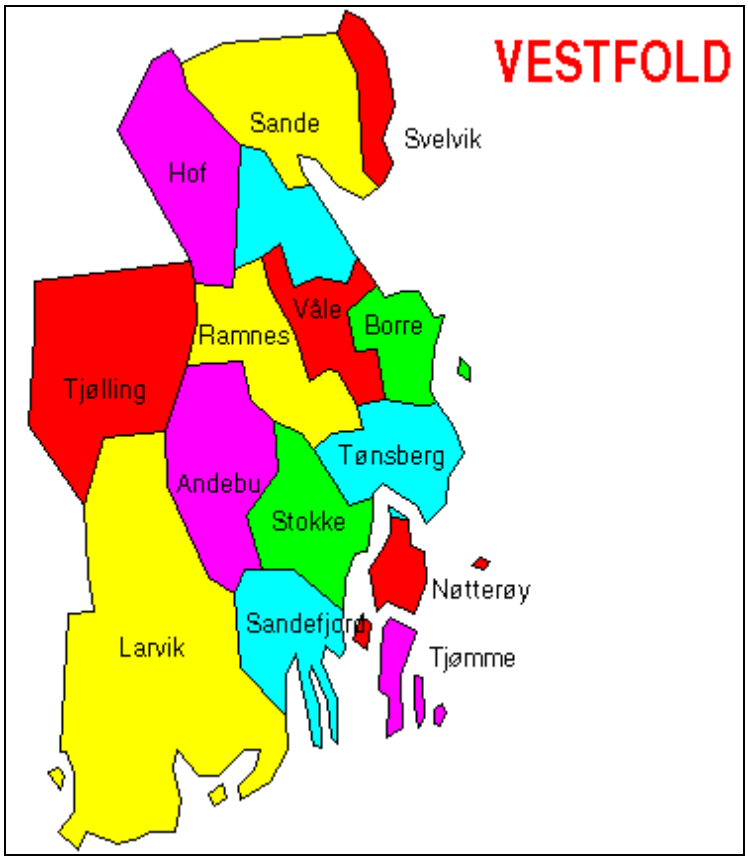

Figure 3: Cities in Vestfold County, where the Participants Live

I arrive at Agniezska's home high on the hill right outside the center of town. Her beautiful Victorian-style home has now been completed. In the years since we had met, I had seen this home go from almost completely gutted, to a resplendent vision of Victorian romantic elegance. Agniezska is heavily pregnant with her second child (Figure 4). I had not known she was having another baby. This gives her great joy, which is clear on her face. She has her entire immediate family living primarily with her. Her father, who helps with all the landscaping and remodeling, her mother, who cares for her beautiful daughter Stella, and Pavel, her 27 year-old brother, who has lived with her in Norway since she herself moved here as a bride. So while she has been in Norway now for nine years, she

has imported the most precious part of her Polish life with her to Norway: her family. This makes her experience unique, as she has had a built-in support system, one born of the most intimate familiarity, available to comfort her. She had not had the experience of aloneness that so many other foreign women who move to Norway must face. But, she also has the burden of functioning as the go-between for her family and her new life in Norway. For they only speak Polish, while one needs Norwegian (or at least very good English to get started) to function and make a life in Norway. In addition, there is some resentment of Polish workers in Norway, as they will come to do seasonal work, and in doing so, often accept lower wages than a Norwegian national. They quite often bring their own food as well, living as cheaply as possible to save their money (as wages in Norway are much higher than in Poland) for when they return home.

The Norwegians look down upon the hardworking Poles, who often come without the luxury of having an education or having learned elegant manners. But they are tolerated, not only because they help make things cheaper for the consumer, but because they are not reviled and looked at as suspiciously as the Muslim immigrants—who usually come from Bosnia, Kosovo and Pakistan and Africa. There is a clear pecking order in terms of how Norwegians view foreigners. And while Agniezska might be Polish, she has the advantage of being highly educated, classy and beautiful. Ironically, these qualities do not often serve her well in such an egalitarian society.

There is an old-world elegance about Agniezska. First, before an in-depth conversation begins, we have sweet tea in porcelain tea cups—served from a formal tea service. Then, catching up a bit, followed by cake. And while Agniezska is very feminine and charming, she acknowledges that cooking is not her forte! But then, that is one of the

reasons she is thrilled to have her mother living with her. She begins by sharing with me how difficult it was for her initially not to find work (like many of the other women who had a very hard time even finding a job) but to become a true part of her organization's work culture. While she was so fortunate to find a job very quickly (although not one functioning as an attorney, which is her training), she said that "nobody talked to me for over six months at my job. They just ignored me socially." When I asked her why she thought this was, she replied, "I don't know. Maybe because I like to dress very feminine, with high heels and short skirts. I like to feel attractive, and where I come from, this is normal for a woman: to dress like a real woman. And the Norwegian women do not do this at all." She was essentially ostracized from her colleagues because of how she dressed—as it must in some way have threatened their status quo of more androgynous work attire.

Figure 4: Agniezska and her mother in Sandefjord

Hearing this part of Agniezska's story reminded me of the stunning French woman from Nice who used to teach in Sandefjord at the International School. She had since moved back to France, leaving her husband to commute from Norway to visit her in Nice. She dressed at the height of womanly South-of-France fashion, turning heads wherever she went. But she became despondent because few would engage in real conversation with her, but merely stare. Granted, she was extraordinary in how she embraced all that was ultra-feminine to her: ruffled mini skirts, sequins at night, and 4 inch heels even in the snow. Norwegians were not sure how to interact with such a glamorous and vivacious creature. It was as if they had a peacock with glorious feathers in their midst, in the wrong climate. So they chose not to interact at all. She lasted just under two years.

Agniezska was more savvy. She created her own world by importing her home culture (in the living form of her parents and brother) as well as choosing a mate who liked her to indulge in traditional feminine trappings (the nails, the make-up, the hair, the stockings, the high heels…). She acknowledges that Norwegian women are different from the women in her country and that gender roles are less defined in Norway. There is more of a blurring between who raises the children, cooks supper, mops floors. I asked her if she ever felt a need to adopt Norwegian pastimes or hobbies, like skiing and she answered:

> No, if my husband wanted a Norwegian woman, than that is what he should have married. I am never going to change the wheels on a car, never ever. We have our own way. It's rather old-fashioned. I do the "lady-things" and he does the "man-things." He likes that I don't work now. I am with our daughter. But later, maybe I should be working to make myself feel good, but only for myself….Poor men here in Norway! I think they are all confused. The women expect the men to be in the kitchen and help around the house. My husband's first wife was like this. They had even written up a job-sharing schedule, so that they could see that they divided up the work equally. But I don't like this at all. I think it is juvenile and silly. Not for grow-ups! We have to be on the same level and value what we can each do.

For Agniezska, her world in Poland, which she often goes to visit for extended months-long at a time, is not so far from Norway geographically. But her brother, Pavel, hopes to import a Polish woman to come and live with him and Agniezska in Norway because he also acknowledges that the two cultures have such diverging views towards gender. Agniezska says:

> I think that the lack of dividing the jobs between men and women makes people lack motivation here to be the best. Should men and women both be carpenters and hairdressers? Who is going to be the doctors? Who is going to raise the children? This is not good and leads to confusion and unhappy marriages, I think. My brother Pavel sees this, and maybe that is why he brings a girlfriend from Poland to come and live here. Norwegian women are not so…womanly and feminine. This is what we know, and what we are comfortable with. I am not surprised when Pavel prefers Polish women to Norwegian women because of this.

In terms of the medical system in Norway, there are tremendous advantages (as it is sometimes free, and other times extremely low-cost—all depending on how elective the procedure or doctor's appointments are). Cancer treatments are free, as are all vaccinations for small children, and prenatal care for women. Even fertility treatments are subsidized by the State depending on a woman's age and health. Such an approach here in the U.S. is unthinkable (and a much-discussed topic in the media as many wealthy women spend fortunes on fertility treatments). So while Agniezska was provided with free medical help to aid in becoming pregnant, her experience with the medical system in Norway was not a positive one. After undergoing two years of constant and invasive treatments (and often with incorrect doses of medicine), she went to Poland to have the same protocol of treatment and became pregnant immediately. She says that the doctors in Norway:

> Did not put me, the patient, first. But their traditions [came] first. In Poland they were just great! I had to go there to get it right. They have [more] money here in Norway, but no interest in the individual. My doctor here wouldn't even talk to my doctor in Poland—I think he was jealous that they did such a good job there. In Poland, they would say, "O.K., maybe we can try something different, and talk the

> Norwegian doctor". But here, they have the best machines, the right and fancy tools, but it's more about documents and forms to fill out, and not about helping the individual people. It's a slower culture. And because the children in school are not made to think that it's good to be the best in the class you see this same attitude even with doctors!

This lead to a discussion about the culture-at-large. She felt that there was a certain "flatness" to Norwegian culture. She said, "They like to be all the same. They feel safe in doing that. That can be boring. Even with fashion, it's all the same!" She bemoaned the lack of competitiveness and individuality within the Norwegian mindset. She found that "Norwegians are very conservative. They don't think forward. They stay with only what they know, and things are used to being. Especially with the medical system, they won't be brave and be open to new things." This still irks her, though she has to some extent become used to it, as a trade-off for the more luxurious lifestyle she is able to lead in Norway. She says, "In Poland, we love competition, but it is the opposite here. Even children are not encouraged to be different from one another."

Figure 5: Veronica in Stavern

Veronica Jorgensen felt much the same about Norwegian culture. We met in Stavern (Figure 5), a charming, well-preserved traditional Norwegian village on the seashore. It is a haven for artists—painters, ceramicists, sculptors. In the summer, like many a southern Norwegian coastal town, it quadruples in population with city folk coming to their summer "*hyttas*" (cabins) to swim, fish and sail. The rhythm of nature takes over and while it is crowded, there is no sense of rushing, only of lolling around near the sea. Veronica is the oldest of my participants, and a woman not only wise in years but extremely well travelled. Soon after marrying her sea-captain husband (whom she met in her hometown of Rotterdam, Holland) they lived all over the world: in Tanzania, Singapore and South America. And yet, having lived internationally for many years, Norway is the only country in which she has felt lonely. She believes this has to do with the Norwegian culture being so non-inclusive. We talked about how our partners had become more "Norwegian" upon moving back to Norway, and how that affected their behavior, tastes, and personality. She said:

> The men and the women, they both start to behave and think like their own culture tells them is right. And since there are not so many other voices here to be heard, this single voice is so narrow. This is limiting, and not good for anyone. That is one of my major problems with life here, that the people do not like diversity in anything: viewpoints, clothes, food, entertainment—they like it all to be the same. It's the opposite of spicy! I do think they could do with a little spicy though. But that is why they like to travel, so they can be free in a different place. Then they come back to Norway and act just the same again. This is also why there is such a problem with drinking here. This is not a good thing, but just how the whole culture is. And with the drinking, comes the sleeping with other wives and not just your own—this is very bad. They think nothing of this kind of behavior. Just free in that way, with no responsibility or commitment. This, I will never understand.

In discussing Norwegian culture, she sees that a returning home, a kind of "prodigal son" complex takes place. There is a natural draw to return to behavior that one was raised

with. She said, "they act more Norwegian once they come and live in Norway. Their open-mindedness to the world is changing when they come back. This is something hard for us, and which I do not like so much.

Veronica talked about how in some ways (such as the language) that Norwegian is not so removed from Dutch. She said, "You know, Dutch is not so different from Norwegian. So with that, I am luckier than many other women from other places." But while the language itself is not dramatically different, the cultural interactions between people are what she finds so lacking and profoundly disturbing. They lead to a sense of isolation.

Isolation

I know it's hard to be reconciled not everything is exactly the way it ought to be.
But please, turn around and step into the future
Leave memories behind enter the land of hope--Zbigniew Herbert, 1993

The sense of isolation that many women feel when they move to Norway affects each participant in a different way. For some, it manifests itself in depression while for others it brings forth a discovery of inner strength; finding solace in their own company. But for all of these women who have moved permanently to Norway, it has forced them to dive into a more Norwegian version of themselves. Those who are successful, accomplish and realize this sooner rather than later.

What Veronica laments is not that she is in a new country, with a new language and cultural rules, but that people are so cold to one another. The boutiques and shops in town all close by 4 during the week. On Sundays, everything is closed. These are the State-wide laws that dictate the hours of operation for businesses. She says, "I do not like that at all, that feeling of no people anywhere…it gets dark again after the shops close on Sat. at 1 and

then there are no people out." She explains that while one can find a place for oneself in Norway that it will never be fulfilling. She believes that "You need to be with your own. We all do. And that is why it is always going to be hard for me here. I will never belong here, never. This is just how things are." She connects this isolation with the habits of the culture. She says, "Norwegian men, they do not like to talk at all sometimes! This is also very different from the Dutch men. They are more open. You and me are more open, we talk about our problems. They are more cold. That is their nature. The long winter, they are isolated."

She laments the fact that her husband has become a Jehovah's Witness since they moved back to Norway. His conversion coupled with Veronica's distance from family affects her profoundly. It creates multi-faceted wedges between her and her husband. She said that converting to Jehovah's Witness:

> Is disruptive for the family if not everyone becomes Jehovah's Witness. They tell him not to celebrate my birthday, and these things. But I cannot change him, and this is his choice. So, I travel now without him, but with my sister who meets me in places from Rotterdam. We go together to Asia, and to the Mediterranean. I have no social life anymore with Peter. It's good that we travelled and had so much fun together all those years ago—because they are not there now. But he is my husband, and that isn't changed, even thought he is so different now. But he is a good man. Still, if something happens one day to him, I go back to Rotterdam. To be with the family and feel a part of the community there. This feeling is important, and something that I do not think foreign women like us ever feel here I Norway. It is more necessary for us to make our own world here with good friends. That is what saves us. It's like we create our own world from the bottom up, yes? One only for us in the middle of the cold people! For we cannot change them. And they are certainly different once they are back in their own country.

So while Veronica keeps herself busy with the small Dutch Club in town, working as a housekeeper for a select few families she likes, and her painting classes, she misses the intimacy she once had with her husband. In addition to his conversion, there is the element of being in Norway that has made him less available psychologically. She says, "they act

more "Norwegian" once they come and live in Norway. Their open-mindedness to the world is changing when they come back. This is something hard for us, and which I do not like so much." Veronica's life has become less social then she would like, just from the nature of being where she is. Not only far from busy international city life, but also in a rural part of Sandefjord, which further makes interacting with people in the street daily difficult. There are no sidewalks where she lives (as is common in many Norwegian towns), but the houses with lawns that come directly up to the street. She keeps a beautiful garden, and prides herself for being so self-reliant socially, while at the same time admitting to missing the more lively life they had while living abroad. She says, "I think it would be better for the Norwegian men to go and live in the country that their foreign wife comes from. Then, many of these problems are not even necessary. For they are so different when they are out in the world. Then, they are charming, and that is why they catch us!" Veronica has adjusted to her life in Norway, but realizes that such a closed-off life is not the most fulfilling. There is more that she would like to share of herself with the world, with her community and with her family in Rotterdam.

In the two conversations I had with Anne Fields (figure 6), she was both reticent and powerfully insightful. She is rather introverted, but at the same time not afraid to share her views even when they differ dramatically from that of the status quo. Having lived in Norway 26 years, she has fully adjusted to life there in all the outwardly, obvious ways. But internally, she shares that it is still hard for her—especially the sense of loneliness that she experiences in Norway. She shared how while learning the language quickly had aided her understanding of what was being said around her, it did not necessarily mean an authentic entrée into the community. She has raised two sons in Larvik (both of whom are

now grown in their early 20s). In England she worked as a young woman as a hairdresser at the original Vidal Sassoon salon in London during the "swinging '60." But upon moving to Norway, she quickly had young children to raise, and also had a husband who was travelling abroad for work more often than he was home. She said:

> I'm afraid I couldn't really do that [be of both cultures at the same time, and not lose herself into Norwegian culture]. I felt like when I moved here I had to learn Norwegian, and that was that. I did lose myself. And I think I am still trying to find it. For that reason, I'd like to move back to England, or just out. I never really found a great social network, even after 25 years. My husband has this great job where he is in charge of quality control for the oil tankers, and so he travels abroad a lot. This is also hard for me, because than it means I am alone here. When the children were little, it didn't matter so much, because I was so busy. But now, it's quite awful to just be on my own for so long while John is in Dubai, the States, or Africa.

She lives outside of the main central, downtown Larvik area. It's a beautiful area in terms of natural splendor: the ocean is a five minute stroll down the gravel path from her house. There is a small pebbled beach to walk along. It's a part of the fjord that leads directly into the North Sea, so the sense of drama one feels while sitting on this beach is timeless and powerful. But in the winter, with the bleak gray skies, one can imagine how this would re-enforce a sense of loneliness and isolation.

The everyday humor and casual interaction of neighbors and friends is something Anne still misses, even after so long in Norway. She said, "I miss the interaction with people, on a casual basis. The humor is missing here…Humor doesn't translate well either. So when I try to make jokes, they don't go over well. Norwegians don't use jokes in their everyday life." So while she understands the deeper nuances of how and even why the lives and actions of Norwegians differs from her own, it doesn't diminish the sense of loss she experiences. Her Norwegian language skills are flawless, which affords her a keen awareness of how they use words within the Nordic cultural context. She says, "they use

the words 'respect' and 'fear' interchangeably, which is strange. So empathy and sympathy are both thought of as weakness here." This was a profound statement. She said:

> I don't think they are very emotional, with themselves or with each other. Therefore they don't need that sort of connection with a single, particular spouse. They live very self-sufficient lives. They fill it with exactly what they want. I think it has to do with the socialist system here. You need not really become an adult here and take responsibility for your actions here. Because the State functions in some ways like the adult.

This kind of detachment as a culture-at-large is felt keenly by the lack of individual connection sought out by members of this community. All of the participants expressed their appreciation for the natural beauty of Norway, but saw such historical, cultural, physical, geographical detachment as partially responsible for the emotional coldness of the people with one another. This kind of separation from one another carries over into a kind of distancing not only of individuals from one another, but even an individual from their deeper self. A loss of identity occurs in this process, of separating one's pre-Norway self from the in-Norway self. This subjugation of self is a strong part of the current that runs through each participant's narrative.

Subjugation of Self

Anne pointed out to me that living so isolated from the rest of the world has actually given her a keener sense of what is happening globally. That the distance she feels now from being a part of the greater world community makes it actually "easier to understand the problems of the world, because I am so disconnected from them. Norway views itself as so separate from the rest of the world, that I now share this viewpoint…. I feel so safe here, that while I have great perspective, there's a kind of damaging dissociation as well." I understood this sentiment. As by the time I moved from Norway, I too felt this way.

Almost afraid to move back to America, where the diversity of cultures creates a conflicting cauldron of values, actions, behaviors, religions, and all the rest. When one lives protected in the cultural "bubble" of Norway, the rest of the world takes on an intimidating caste. The fear of genuine chaos and the pungent improvisation inherently present in reality makes it scary to dive back in.

All the participants felt that Norway saw itself as disconnected from the rest of Europe, and in many ways superior to the rest of the world. In terms of education, free medical health, abundant social welfare aid to citizens… there is much to warrant this belief of having it much better than most other countries. But is also nurtures a kind of separationist attitude. While much financial aid is offered to African countries (per capita, Norway is one of the leading monetary donors to impoverished countries) this breeds a mentality of superiority, and of not being truly connected with what is happening in other places. A benevolent donor mentality—kind, but not emotionally involved. Part of this protectionist attitude stems from the fact that Norway is so geographically isolated from the rest of the European continent. Anne said:

> This is not a country in which people share either: whether it's sharing jokes, experiences and events as a together thing. But as a group of individual souls. They don't reach out to one another. This can make it a painfully lonely place psychologically. Especially if you come from a place in which people interact with one another daily and less formally—then it would be dreadfully hard I think to get used to the colder more formal and stilted Norwegian way. That excludes the drunken parties here of course. Those are an entirely different social situation. Anything goes then, which I think is just awful. The drinking culture here is so seeped within how they socialize with one another….but what's worse is the sense of disconnect people have with one another here.

The lack of emotionalism is troubling to many of the participants. They are more keenly aware of how lacking an emotional intimacy is between friends in Norway then someone who has grown up with this as the norm. Though many Norwegians who have lived abroad

will acknowledge this as true, it is not something they have a need to change. So, it becomes the challenge of the foreigner who moves to Norway to learn how to interact in a more detached manner with the society.

Figure 6: Anne, Becky and Mary (left to right) in Larvik

Mary Andersen (Figure 6) has given much thought to the issues surrounding identity and selfhood. While she had made a full life in the tiny sea-side town of Åsgardstrand (the birthplace of the great Norwegian painter Oskar Munch), it is one contained in the smallest town I've ever seen. Even the one café in town (which is now run by Mary) is only open seasonally. There is an irony present, as Mary has an exuberant, outspoken, vibrant personality matched by her flaming red hair and flashing green eyes. Under her tutelage, the café patrons in town have learned to appreciate her Greek salads, freshly baked breads, good Belgian chocolates and real French cheesecake (as opposed to the light, fluffy gelatin-based one they know). She is so artistic, and far too flashy for this town. And yet, she

chooses to stay here, rather than move to the larger nearby town of Tønsberg. It's as if the quietness of Åsgardstrand, with all its limitations allows her to develop her inner strength. A self-reliant version of herself emerged during her time here. Because her husband is a chief steward on ships, he is gone for four weeks at a time, and home for two. It's been the rhythm of their time together since she moved here. They actually met on a cruise ship, where Mary was working in one of the retail boutiques on board. While her first husband was also Norwegian, they had never chosen to live in Norway. But in marrying Dag (her husband now) a different decision was made.

Mary said, "You need to really have a sense of self. And that is really hard once you are living permanently in a foreign country. You can easily start to doubt yourself, and that leads to a downward spiral. It helps that I always just did my own thing here and didn't listen much to others. But at the same time, your kids are half that other country." Mary established early on with Dag that she wanted her role to be that of caretaker, and wanted to stay home and raise their two children while Dag worked. This suited him fine, and they worked out a balance that suited their relationship. It also allowed Mary to remain the queen of her domain—while her in-laws and neighbors might have plenty to say about how she (as a foreigner) doesn't do things the Norwegian way—at least at home she could do as she wished. It afforded her a kind of safe haven within her own house from the more judgmental eyes of those around her. And in this way, she was not as bothered as my other participants by the criticisms of those around her. Creating a clearly drawn division of what is her world, versus what is the outside Norwegian world helped maintain her self of self.

Becky Hellum (see Figure 6) has much to say about the subject of self-hood. And about most else as well. She is the most voluble of the participants, and her down-home hillbilly wisdom is as funny as it is true. She is a beautiful, blond- haired, blue eyed Southern Belle, who comes from mountain country in the hills of Maggie Valley, North Carolina. While she doesn't often go home to visit, her Southern accent has not faded at all with time, and Norwegians often gawk at her when she hugs shopkeepers, charming even the most reticent Norwegians with her smiles and heavily Southern-accented English. Interestingly, her Norwegian has no pronounced American accent of any kind. Neither does Mary's or Anne's. All three women know each other, and have suggested that we meet at Becky's home in Larvik (a town which Becky calls the "armpit of the world") for tea and conversation. They need little encouragement, as they have a warm camaraderie that clearly goes back many years. I am privileged that they have included me into their discussions for this evening as a contemporary comrade—albeit one who made the choice to leave.

Becky has two children, and is divorced. She mentions often of how she would love to move to Italy. When asked why she doesn't, she says that her children are Norwegian, and she refuses to make them leave their world. Also, that her husband would not let the children relocate abroad. When I point out to her that they are of the age when they could chose for themselves which parent they would like to live with, she finds other reasons why it wouldn't work. The bottom line is that relocating permanently takes a tremendous amount of energy. Learning a new language well enough to find a job, afford housing and create new friends and community. The latter two issues would be no problem for Becky. Out of all the participants, she stands apart in that she effortlessly generates

enthusiasm and kindness in her wake. It's contagious—she seems to spread empathy and delight among all those she touches. And she will literally touch you—which is very at odds with the sober Norwegian manner of keeping space between individuals.

Becky realizes that compared to so many immigrants (refugees) who come to Norway, not even realizing what snow is, that she has a much easier life. But her frustration quickly bubbles forth to the surface when discussing her dreams, hopes, vision of a future for herself. She says, "I guess in some ways we should count ourselves lucky, as many who come here can never adapt, and things fall apart. Or, on the other hand, maybe they are the lucky ones." This makes the rest of us around her kitchen table pause and think for a minute: how would it have been if we each had realized right away that Norway was not where our best selves could come forth, and had made the decision to leave right away? One thing all of us around the table realized was that living in Norway had changed us profoundly. In many good ways, and perhaps, in some less-than-flattering ways. As Becky put it:

> I feel like I am so resourceful now. I've survived here, so I know I can survive anything! We are all survivors. But don't ask me to shovel snow every day! But then again, you can't pay people to do it for you here, and God forbid a neighbor offers to help. Even if they have a snow blower and I don't. That makes me so mad sometimes. Empathy is not a dime a dozen here. You might get respect, but don't hold your breath for empathy.

Becky worries sometimes that she is losing her compassion for strangers, learning to ignore others the "Norwegian way." She sees that in adopting Norwegian habits, she loses part of what makes her so kind and generous spirited, and that saddens her. But it's also something she deems natural and perhaps necessary in order to interact regularly with her host culture. She believes that:

> To be humble is to be honest with yourself—it's not like the Norwegians use it, which is to pretend humility. I didn't learn the meaning of humble until after I'd moved here. People here don't own their own failings. They don't want to be introspective enough to admit their part in any emotional way. So in that way, I can't connect with many Norwegians. I get so tired of them always "passing the buck", and never wanting to step up and take ownership of their actions. It's too based on communal and group mentality. Not enough encouragement to be an individual, for better or for worse.

She sees that there is a certain balance that needs to occur in order for the foreign woman do well in Norway: that woman has to somehow hold true to some parts of herself, while adopting Norwegian traits as well. The complicated question is, how much of myself should I allow to be overtaken by these new traits? And I think for each participant, the balance is different—but for each, affected by their background, their family in their country of origin, and their family in Norway. The transformation that each woman undertakes is a continuing process. For most, the longer they stay in Norway, the less connected to their old self they become, while the new persona they take on leaves them with ambivalent emotions.

Transformation/Resignation

I can be changed by what happens to me. I refuse to be reduced by it—
Maya Angelou

The transition from subjugation of self into transformation is the most interesting part of this discussion. For it is an ongoing process for the participants, so while revealing in terms of how they have re-created themselves after moving to Norway, they also have some of this journey that is yet to come. Each participant views their move to Norway as a pivotal event in their life, and has a strong response to this move. For some, it is expressed outwardly and often in words and actions, while for others, their response has been to draw even more inward into their own self-contained world.

The beginning of their transformation began with learning the language. This is the most important step in becoming part of the Norwegian community. For some participants, this was fairly easy, while for others it took an average of four years. A few of the participants became new mothers during their early years in Norway, and this was also a personal transformation of another kind. The participants that had children while in Norway chose to stay at home and raise their children while they were small, which is not what Norwegian women usually chose to do. Norwegian women take one year off to be with their infant, and then go back to their full-time job. For the foreign women to choose to stay home with their children until they were old enough to begin school also set them apart from their Norwegian peers. Thoughts about gender and the role that it plays in housekeeping and child rearing came into view. And because it is not easy for most of the participants to find work in Norway, staying home with their children gave them an identity to cling to during a time when their identity was much in flux.

Sophia Titer Larsen (Figure 7) is the only participant that had little problem finding a job as soon as she moved to Norway. She is a very self-assured, direct and outgoing woman who moved to Norway 12 years ago from Montreal, where she had met her husband, Øyvind. She is unique in that that she not only got jobs immediately after moving to Norway (and before learning Norwegian), but international, competitive and highly sought after positions. She worked first for the Canadian Embassy in Oslo, coordinating all their cultural events. And later, she was the director for the design team of the luxury ship, The World of Resident Sea. In this position, she would fly between Milan, New York City and Paris to meet with the couples buying the apartments aboard the ship, and introduce them to their chosen architect and decorator. These glamorous jobs seemed to provide her

with a connection to large world-class city life and all the excitement that they offer. So I was surprised that she felt she would not reach her true potential while living in Norway. She said, "You have to realize that your potential will never be what it could be if you had stayed in your own country. You have to give up a lot of dreams and goals, or you'll be miserable. Because as a foreigner, Norwegians will never truly embrace you as one of their own, and you'll never really have the perfect language fluency of a local." But that in the stead of true acceptance, there is a kind of gentle complacency that makes raising children lovely in this setting. And that one learns to soak up the peaceful atmosphere, filled with nature and quite nights whether you want to or not. So that while one isn't necessarily transformed in the way in which one originally thought, there is still an act of change that takes place unconsciously.

Figure 7: Sophia, Tamar and fellow North American (left to right) in Oslo

With Sophia, there is a kind of resignation that seeps through her disappointment. We spoke about how she felt when she first moved to Norway and whether she viewed it as a temporary move, or something permanent. She said:

> I think I came with a naïve expectation. This was obviously not a good thing. Although I suppose it was also a natural thing. I met Øyvind in college, and we moved here together after graduation. I had studied abroad and travelled extensively. But there is a huge difference between those things, and actually moving somewhere permanently and setting up house and family in this new country. Especially when this new county is as provincial and limiting as Norway. Don't get me wrong, it also has its strengths. They are just not the things I am keen on. Yes, yes, the nature is gorgeous. But so what, I want interaction with people, energy, liveliness, culture, art, symphony and ballet. These things are not Norway's forte. So, not a good fit in that way. Much like you. This is why I was always so drawn to you I think. This was a culture I just couldn't relate to. And that is certainly not Norway's fault. It's my own, not realizing fully just what a bad fit I was for this culture. But by then, you are married, buying an apartment in Oslo, making friends, learning the language, getting jobs…. Making a life. You are also not fully aware for a really long time I think just what a wrong fit it is. You think with enough work you can make it work. *Through sheer will, and later, desperation*.

A kind of resolve sets in, a desire to make it work, no matter what. This is something that was re-iterated by Becky, Anne, Mary, Agnieszka, Veronica and Natasha. There was a kind of commitment to making life in Norway work, as it was a parallel for making their marriage work. And for some reason, none of these women (myself included) was initially willing to sacrifice their marriage for their own needs. Even when Becky divorced her Norwegian spouse, she chose to stay in Norway, feeling that she had transformed so much into a Norwegian version of herself that to go back "home" was no longer a viable option. That the time invested in raising children in Larvik was so pivotal to how she viewed herself (while she admittedly did not feel connected to her local community in any way other than through the children) that she had become "re-born" in a sense, as a Scandinavian.

Sophia explains that moving to Norway is also quite different from moving to another European country. She says, "Norway is different in that it knows about the rest of the world, and sees itself as a superior Scandinavian center. But does not allow any inclusion of that Other. God, imagine how hard it is for the refugees who come here." We talk about how much easier it is for foreign women who chose to move here as opposed to those that come to escape persecution. And there is a bit of guilt that the women have in complaining, when compared to refugees that one sees standing idly around in each Norwegian town, they have life so easy.

I try sensitively to bring up the issue of race with Sophia, as she is of Jamaican and Haitian descent. Her dark skin and hair set her dramatically apart from Norwegians in a striking visual way. She says, "I even get used to how everyone is white and has blond hair. And often forget that I look so different." She said, "about being black and female in Norway…at times it is just the ordeal of explaining where in the world I come from and then the wow, you are a North American black as opposed to 'thank goodness you are not a direct from Africa black'." But she does her best to put that kind of response aside, and not let it bother her too much. She is more bothered by the "exotic fantasy spin" she gets from many Norwegian men, especially when they are drunk. She shares that she has few black or racially mixed friend in Oslo, and that "it is like I save up all my ethnic flavors and interest until I am in my Mom's kitchen and surrounded by my family. Black boot camp in Canada, the poor children! It can be intense, but they have figured out that mom is a little bit all or nothing in most situations." She has found her peace regarding ethnic differences by compartmentalizing them. In Canada she and her children can revel in their Caribbean roots with others who share their cultural heritage, while in Norway there is a kind of

deliberate ignoring, or just not seeking out other black folks, that works best for Sophia. She has found her place in Norway, and has a well-established group of friends and business acquaintances. She is known in the Oslo Canadian community, as well as in many international business organizations. But even after 12 years in Norway, views Montreal as "home." She still feels that "you never know how long I will be here." With both her and Veronica, there was absoluteness with how quickly and unequivocally they viewed their home country as "home." So while psychologically they view their places of origin as where they see their hearts, it is firmly in the present days in Norway that they live out everyday life, functioning fully within Norwegian society.

Figure 8: Natasha in Larvik

For Natasha (Figure 8), the youngest of my participants, the transition into immersing herself into Norwegian life has taken the most outward work. A beautiful,

extremely petite brunette, she comes from Teheran, Iran. She met her husband, Pål, in medical school in Hungary. While they both took the exact same program and coursework completing their medical degree in Hungary, only Pål (as a Norwegian national) was approved to work immediately in Norway as a doctor. As a foreigner, Natasha's degree was deemed insufficient and she was told by the Norwegian Medical Association and State medical board that she would need two additional years of medical school in Norway before she could work as a doctor in Norway. There seemed no other reason for this, other than the fact that Pål is Norwegian, and Natasha is not. She gave birth to two small boys in the first few years in Sandefjord, and then completed the necessary additional classes so that she could start her career in Norway. She now works as a radiologist at the main county hospital in Tønsberg (30 minutes from Sandefjord, on the way to Oslo) and in addition, is pregnant with her third child.

Unlike Becky and Mary, Natasha wants her children to feel "only half Norwegian" rather than entirely Norwegian. She wants them to know that part of them is Iranian, even if they have little connection to that culture. She speaks English with Pål and only occasionally Farsi with her children. So, they are growing up with both English and Norwegian but no fluency in their mother's native tongue. She is sad that her children "cannot speak to my own parents" and also that her parents are so isolated when they do come to Norway (because they speak neither Norwegian nor English, which is widely understood). But mostly, she worries that she "has fallen into this kind of world, where I am becoming more Norwegian, and less Persian. Who will I be then? To which country will I belong to more?" This is a central issue to this research, and an issue that lights a fire in the eyes of each foreign woman I encountered in Norway. She feels that "the longer I

stay here [in Norway], I become weaker in what I want to do—to move abroad to Iran, or the States," as if she is unwittingly settling into life in Norway more than she wishes she were. She is not consciously choosing to embrace her present life in Norway, because she sees it as a failure of accomplishing what she had set out to do years earlier: work in the States with her husband as doctors together.

What she does not see is that she has realized part of that dream—as they do both work as doctors in neighboring towns. She is creating a family, putting down new roots for herself, and making progress professionally. She embodies a kind of passive transformation. The paradigm of her dream must shift, and then she will see perhaps that she has come far in reaching her hopes and dreams. We talked about how we see things in life—some small everyday things—differently now after our time in Norway. I shared with her how while sitting at my favorite café in Sandefjord that nothing seemed to have changed. Not the décor, the woolen blankets outside to keep off even the summer's chill air and dampness from the rain, not the menu—not even by one item. And most tellingly, how in a crowded café outside there was a wait for tables. But when I took the available empty table I wondered why the queue of people weren't sitting at that table. Then I realized that it was because it was not in the direct sunlight, and thus, not appealing to Norwegians. It took me two minutes to figure this out. Natasha laughed in understanding. She shared with me how she now notices which side of the sidewalk have sunshine, and which side is the shady one. In Teheran, there is abundant sun, so the issue of seeking out as much sunlight as possible is never an issue.

In a thousand small ways, each participant has changed through their experiences in Norway. While for most it was not a life exactly as they had foreseen, life in any country

can easily be fraught with the unexpected. And it is through facing the difficulties along one's path that one is challenged. And I would say that all 7 participants continue to be challenged almost daily by their interpretations and misinterpretations of what Norwegians mean and say. As Mary says about her journey along the holy trail of Santa Maria de Compostella (a pilgrimage trail in Spain, dating from the Middle Ages):

> As women we tend to be the nurturers, givers. Sometimes we need to disappear from this. And nobody knew my background, and it was a chance to escape while walking for hundreds of miles…How great is it that as women we get to pick and chose what we pass on to our children? Even in terms of legacy: which holidays we will teach them to celebrate and which traditions we will urge them to uphold…. We get to choose from both the Norwegian and our home traditions.

So while moving to Norway was not at all a holy pilgrimage, it was to create a home and family life, which is no less meaningful. The transformation that each of these women continues to undergo will be influenced by how much they hold on to their own traditions, as well as how much the Norwegian community chooses to include them.

Each participant has made different choices regarding language. Initially, each participant used English with their Norwegian spouse, although some have switched with their partner to the Norwegian language. But it is the choice of language that each one decided to use with their children that is most telling about how they view their own identity, and in how they hope their own country of origin will leave some measure of imprint upon their children.

This choice of language is explored further when Mary, Anne and Becky talk about how the language they feel most comfortable in is not the language of their children. I was struck by the fact that for Becky, it did not really trouble her that her children were not fluent in her own tongue, while for Anne and Mary, it was important that the children be completely bi-lingual. It is interesting to note that along with this sentiment, Becky's

actions reflect this complete shift into Norway as foremost in her world—as she has not returned to the States for a visit in 11 years. Whereas Anne and Mary both have visited their homelands on a more regular basis.

With Natasha, this is illustrated not by her own ambivalence and frustration with learning Norwegian, but with her sadness about the language divide between generations in the family of her birth, versus the family she is creating in Norway with her husband. It is in this divergence of past and present that she does not see a solution for the future. With Becky, this is manifested in how she prefers using English herself, both in her business and personal life, but is not bothered at all by her children not speaking English very well. And since she has chosen not to visit the States often, she is not as troubled by the fact that her younger son cannot easily relate to his grandmother, aunt, or cousins. There is a division of the worlds for her, with the world of her present reality being Norway. Mary and Anne have children that are completely bilingual (in English and Norwegian) which also has fostered a connection with both their parent's homelands (U.S.A for Mary, and Great Britain for Anne) that is not present with many of the other participants' children. When talking about language and children with Mary, she says, "I just think speaking to one's newborn child in one's native language is a profoundly telling part of how one sees oneself in the world." With Sophia, this is more ambivalent. Her children speak Norwegian, French (from their year in Paris) and some English. But because they have spent most of their formative young years in Oslo, they feel most comfortable in Norwegian. While her physical life as a young, married woman has been based in Norway, her emotional and psychological landscape keeps a close connection to her place of birth. It is there—in Montreal—that that she views as her "true home." She keeps close to her heart Gadamer's

meaning when he writes (1988:400), "However much one may adopt a foreign attitude of mind, one still does not forget one's own view of the world and of language." This idea is clear even within Becky, as she might have chosen to let English fade from her children's vocabulary, but she herself uses only English when she speaks to them. They respond to her in Norwegian. Their exchanges are so different not only because the language used is not a shared one, but because the intonations, inflections, ideals and beliefs behind these languages often differs.

When discussing language with each of the participants, they had differing views as to how important it was to share one's native language with one's children. Some of the participants even became slightly defensive, feeling perhaps a bit inadequate that they had not insured their own legacy in a fully intact manner. For in not having one's children know one's native language there is a loss that occurs in the sharing of memory, traditions and native beliefs. The songs and lullabies, the smells of traditional dishes simmering, the focus on long-held holidays can all easily fade when one relinquishes one's own language, and does not pass it on to the next generation.

Summary

In Chapter Five the data presented are drawn from the research conversations held with the participants. These research conversations are comprised from the participants' personal narratives. The voices that dominate the text are those of the participants, and while my voice as a researcher is present, it is secondary to that of the participants. The data presented in Chapter Five are analyzed further in Chapter Six, through the lens of critical hermeneutic theory. This analysis focuses on the research categories of identity,

solicitude and imagination. Emerging from these interpretations comes forth a new story, one that calls for greater embrace of outside cultures within the context of Norwegian life.

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS OF DATA

Narrative of Identity

Introduction

While in Chapter Five I introduce the voices of the participants, it is here in Chapter Six that I now weave these voices into a chorus. This is done through looking at the stories as a cohesive whole, a kind of meta-narrative. These voices contain variations in tempo, rhythm and inflection, and yet, there is a strong similarity between them. These narratives are explained through critical hermeneutic analysis, through the presence of narrative identity, solicitude and imagination.

Interestingly, the participants did not ask if anything new was revealed through the exploration of identity, culture change and transnationalism. They seemed well-versed in not only their own story of permanent dislocation, but familiar with this story also from hearing it from so many others. There was a kind of "normalcy" shared by the group in their very "otherness." They did, however, hope for a refiguration of cross-cultural boundaries in Norway.

The process of data collection fostered an intimacy between myself and the participants. In sitting down for the first time with the data having been recorded, transcribed and reflected upon, there was a new understanding that emerged. The understanding that for the participants, there is an ebb and flow, much like a shifting ocean tide. Some participants fight harder and more actively to become and remain a part of their local Norwegian community, while others wait more passively by the water's edge, sometimes out of reach. And yet, with each, there is a repeating kind of fluctuation that occurs as they engage, withdraw, and re-engage with Norway. They share ambivalent

feelings about living in Norway, although some are more vocal than others about voicing these thoughts with me during our conversations.

The cohesiveness of the participants' stories is striking. These stories together become a meta-narrative, one in which the participants' stories form a unified meaning. Within this meta-narrative, there are variations and sub-plots, fraught with tension. These variations were due to a difference in the participants' ages, life experiences, personalities and personal expectations. Some participants were more open to embracing changes, while others were not. In exploring these concepts through the lens of narrative identity, there is a way to look at this kind of variance among the participants with an ethical aim, one leading towards new understandings.

The foreign women in Norway that chose to be a part of this research all had one thing in common: they were relieved to tell their story of cultural change. It's as if once the flood gates had opened, their individual pronounced views on cross-cultural relationships and Norwegian culture became a lens through which they now viewed most elements of their lives. In addition, their narratives took on the theatrical format of "before Norway" and "after moving to Norway," with the pivotal catalyst being their leap into life in the Arctic. There was a dual feeling present. Firstly, that one must commit fully to making life in Norway work (meaning, dive into Norwegian culture as fully as possible). And secondly, not completely let go of one's roots. The balance between these two forces is what creates some of the tension present in their stories. This balance is explored in the first category in a three-pronged exploration of the themes uncovered in the data. The first segment in the category of identity is "Voices Heard," which acknowledges the tension present in the participants' transcultural shift into Norwegian culture. The second segment

is "Changing Lifeworld," which explores the merging of identity, Norway and self. And the third segment is "Changing Language," which delves into the emotional, psychological and intellectual relationship between language and identity. The second category of solicitation continues to explore the theory relating to the shifts in identity that occur, while the third category of imagination brings the research into the "kingdom of as if," exploring through theory what is possible with regards to this shift in identity.

Each of these sections is underscored by Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity, which is utilized to analyze the data. Specifically with regards to the pivotal concept of *idem* and *ipse*, the lenses within which to view narrative identity. It is through the power of narrative identity (utilizing *idem* and *ipse* as cornerstones) and imagination that the two sides of identity are merged into one, and that new understandings of self and of other may come forth.

Voices Heard

The view held by the participants is that to identify too strongly with one's homeland while creating a new life in Norway only leads to unhappiness. The data show that there were many shared concerns by the research participants along this vein, and experiencing conflict in how they view themselves in the world in terms of national and personal identity is a pervasive theme. They wonder if their views are interesting enough for the rest of the world to notice, and if issues of identity and culture change are important to those who choose to stay in their home country. They question the validity and strength of their unified voices within the greater Norwegian society. They wonder where the "cut-off" point is: or how many years it takes until one is no longer "American" or "Polish" or "Dutch" but instead becomes "Norwegian." Or, if one ever really can become Norwegian.

In each conversation, it becomes clear that while one does give up part of who one was (in terms of nationality, just by the nature of being gone so long, and also of adopting so many Norwegian customs), that still one will never really become Norwegian. This is something that the participants each conveyed in very different ways.

Issues of transnationalism and of culture-change are indeed of great interest even for those who do not decide to cross international waters to set up their home. As is the issue of caring (explored in the coming discussion of narrative identity and solicitude) that occurs when oneself becomes merged with the other is a concept that locals here also can take part in. For there is an increasingly vocalized desire of individuals in the States (and elsewhere) to explore their multi-faceted background of culture, and of how these cultures combine to provide understanding in the present reality. In light of understanding one's cultural background, it also paves a way in which to guide the next generation, and provides a meaningful way in which traditions may be passed on to our children. Creating a way in which to connect generations. Ricoeur writes (1992:115) that there is a "connectedness of life," and through telling stories, this connectedness roots the narrator and participant in a place in time and history. And following this, that there is a moral responsibility through narrative, grounded in ethical responsibility towards others.

While Norway treats its own Norwegian nationals in a very ethical manner, the participants did not believe that this was the same with regards to foreign women in Norway. There was a different and unequal relationship that the State's policies had when engaging with foreign women than that of Norwegians. The participants are keen to note these differences. They clamor for their voices to carry equal weight in taking part in community decision making and even in State-wide policy implication and

implementation. The need to be invited to be a full participant in Norwegian society is pervasive throughout the data. There is a despondency that emerges due to the lack of a synthesis between inclusivity of the other and of real understanding of the other.

Ricoeur argues with his theory of narrative (192:140-168) that the above-mentioned dichotomy of identity can be answered through the emplotment of the stories we tell. And that is through this emplotment that we can interpret our identity, and that we can imagine ourselves in relationship with the other. It is through narrative that we have a mediation of self identity. Ricoeur writes that (1992:140) the "interconnectedness of events constituted by emplotment allow us to integrate with permanence in time… in the domain of sameness-identity." That there is a dialectic present in the exploration of *idem* and *ipse* with regards to how we understand self-hood. With *idem*, there is the identity that remains the same, that contains the enduring characteristics that can seem to remain mostly unchanged. It is with *ipse* that there is the part of identity that changes because of new fields of experience. The new experiences shared by the participants in moving to Norway creates a kind of ex-patriot family unit within the scheme of the greater Norwegian society. They have shared experiences that bond them together as a unit separate in some ways (most tellingly, by not working within a Norwegian context, or in not living socially with Norwegians as the primary social outlet). The data show that the matter of weight given to outsiders' voices is one full of contradictions—as it is one that espouses the importance of their needs (and of making them a more inclusive part of Norwegian society), while at the same time not making room in the society for this inclusion to take place.

Bernstein reminds us (1983:29) that in interpreting other cultures and societies, we can learn more about ourselves and that it is a necessary element towards the path seeking

true wisdom. He writes (1983:29) that "the concept of *learning from* which is involved in the study of other cultures is closely linked with the concept of *wisdom*. We are confronted not just with different techniques, but with new possibilities of good and evil in relation to which men may come to terms with life." And while stories from women in Norway might not seem at first glance to relate strongly to those snug in the hometowns of their childhood, Ricoeur (1992:115) reminds us that we gain a kind of connectedness though sharing our narratives with one another. In sharing their stories, the participants have the opportunity to reflect on how shifting cultures has profoundly influenced their views as to where they belong in the world. Through interpretation and critique the stories they tell offer a personal and unfettered lens into a world of culture-change.

Identity is not merely formed by the experiences one has as time unfolds, but by the act of reflection upon the experiences one has had during the passage of time. Ricoeur believes that (1991:432) "A life is no more than a biological phenomenon as long as it is not interpreted…To pave the way towards this new phase in the analysis we must attend to the mixture of doing and undergoing, of action and suffering which makes up the very texture of life." Herda emphasizes the importance of this concept when she writes (1999:59) that understanding and self-realization only makes up "half the journey and that the journey back is when critique and social change can take place—where social action is the text in front of us." For it in the process of self-reflection that a call for action may begin to emerge. This is further explored with Ricoeur's theory of mimesis in light of coming to new understandings about ourselves and others.

Changing Lifeworld

The fateful decision to move to Norway unifies the group of participants. The participants must be viewed in light of this pivotal experience, as their identity cannot be understood without acknowledging this experience as a defining feature of both how they view themselves, as well as how their society views them. Their stories share this dichotomy through a unifying lens of permanent dislocation. Ricoeur believes that (1992:147) "[t]he narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character." The experience of moving to Norway, and of having shared experiences creates a unifying way in with the participants see themselves in the world. How they view themselves in terms of identity cannot at this point be separated from this experience. The tension that continues to exist with regards to identity is that of *idem* and *ipse*, or sameness versus the opposite pole of change. The mimetic function of narrative can offer a way in which to understand these changes in identity with regards to real life.

The conversations with the participants contained many discussions of how we see ourselves so differently now that we have lived in Norway. That our pre-understandings of the world, what Ricoeur (1984:54-64) refers to as $mimesis_1$ are brought with us to our new life abroad, but that we could still listen authentically to each other with the intention of coming to new understandings about others, as well as about ourselves. Such new understandings are what allow us to explore ideas for our future, of new possibilities, what Ricoeur (1984:64-70) refers to as $mimesis_3$. The participants struggle to reach this stage of understanding in their own narrative identity. It seems difficult for them to think about

how their lives might be different in the future, and to relate this idea towards an ethical responsibility towards others. It's as if they have forgotten that they are connected to the general Norwegian society, and not only their own foreign-women's groups.

Their lack of physical integration is reflected within $mimesis_2$ in terms of a shared world envisioned by them with others. They lack the ability at this point in time to envision how an emplotment of future possibilities could be a part of a changed and bettered present reality for them either individually, or as a group. So, in this sense, they struggle to take $mimesis_2$ into the real of the "kingdom of as if" which is present in $memisis_3$. $Mimesis_2$ serves as a mediating function between $mimesis_1$ and $mimesis_3$. For it is the place in which a "pre-understanding" and "post- understanding" (1984:65) unfold. It is through this tri-fold emplotment that the stories here unfold, and in which there can be a (Ricoeur 1984:75) a "telling, following, understanding." Through this circular concept of mimesis, the data can move from being stories, and into being agents for action. Ricoeur believes (1984:77) that the "act of reading is thus the operator that joins $mimesis_3$ to $mimesis_2$." It is the act of reading which takes these stories from a part of the past, into a world of action.

Social action in Norway is often left to political parties and politicians to create and implement. There is little tradition for grass-roots organization prompting change. The context in which the participants find themselves in not a familiar one in light of these issues. In engaging the tri-fold concept of mimesis, there can here be created a space for a new way of engaging community involvement and in spearheading the kind of change desired by the participants according to the data. This would be a way that they could

experience mimesis$_3$ in a communal sense through the outcome of sharing their stories with a greater public.

The research participants all believe that one is formed by where one comes from: by how the place itself, and how the community it envelopes leaves an imprint upon one's soul. But that in changing cultures, that one adapts at first out of necessity, and later out of choice. This fluidity of how one views oneself in the world is what Habermas terms the lifeworld. While one's place of origin and social background might dictate one's original prejudices, beliefs and assumptions, it evolves when a new culture is taken inwards to the soul. The contradictions and challenges of adjusting to a Norwegian life allow the participants all to place the lifeworld in a new context. Habermas writes (1988:23), "The lifeworld, of which institutions form a part, comes into view as a complex of interpenetrating cultural traditions, social orders, and personal identities." The concept of lifeworld is expressed in the decisions the participants chose to make about what language they use with their spouse, and even more so that which they chose to use with their children.

Habermas believes (1988:22) "the lifeworld forms both the horizon for speech situations and the source of interpretations, while it in turn reproduces itself only through ongoing communicative actions." For Natasha, because her children cannot speak with her parents (due to the children speaking English and Norwegian, while her parents speak only Farsi) she feels a slipping away of her past world, of her heritage, or of her pre-Norway self. The tension born out of this disparity is akin to what Habermas writes (1988:22):

> From the very start, communicative acts are located within the horizon of shared, unproblematic beliefs; at the same time, they are nourished by these resources of

> the always already familiar. The constant upset of disappointment and contradiction, contingency and critique in everyday life crashes against a sprawling, deeply set and unshakable rock of background assumptions, loyalties, and skills.

It is the internal landscape of the participants' souls that needs to undergo change just as much as their views of Norway, self, and identity. These two things have a reciprocal relationship, much in flux depending on one's ability to adjust, learn the language, make friends and find a job. For the pluralized lifeworlds become integrated with one another when there is a letting go of preconceived outcomes.

Changing Language

Herda writes (1999:7) that "an essential point in critical hermeneutic participatory research is that it is in language and our tradition that we have our very being." For each participant, the lifeworld they embody is evident by the relationship they have with language. The language one uses plays a large role in how one views the world. Herda believes (1999:61) that "Humans dwell in language. Language does not dwell in humans. Language brings worlds into being and, in bringing forth a particular world, the relationships among everything in that world are disclosed." Language functions here as the medium through which we tell—and can share—our stories. The discussion in how we view ourselves and how this is manifested in the language we speak to our children is an outward manifestation of what Ricoeur refers to in $mimesis_1$—that the pre-understandings of our world sets the stage for how we see each other, and for how we see ourselves. And that it is with these pre-understandings of the world that we come into relationships with one another—that we authentically bring ourselves into the shared world in which we live.

It is through the movement of evolving from $mimesis_3$ into $mimesis_2$ in which language connects to this change in identity. The data show that depending on the kind of

future the participants imagine for themselves, they would choose either to live exclusively in their adopted home's language, or they would cling strongly to the language of their homeland. The intersection of these ideas, and of how they choose to use language as a method for interacting with the world, with their children, with their husband and with their friends calls for an exploration of the link between language and of narrative identity.

Early on in the collection of the data, I become aware that each woman's story is so poignantly beautiful, full of hope, imagination, loss, challenge and change. The participants move from being curious about whether there is an audience for their stories, to urging me to write a book on the experiences of women who have moved abroad permanently. As if telling their stories and having a witness (the researcher) makes their narratives more valid. The validation empowers them to share episodes of their life in Norway that have humored, scared, and changed them as individuals in the world. There is a longing for solidarity. They wonder why women's stories are not more focused on in the news, in non-fiction works, in films and other media. As if even in today's age, and even in modern Scandinavia, there is a subconscious approach that women are not as important as men. They are interested in hearing the theory that grounds their narratives in this research, and in an intellectual milieu. They love the idea that their stories are not only going to be heard, but be written down. Doubly authenticated, as they tell me with happy voices. For there is still the belief by many that for something to be truly heard, it must be not only spoken of, but written about. For in this manner, there is no denial, ignoring of, or passing over. For these participants, telling me their stories is both liberating personally, while as a community it provides a feeling of being triumphantly authenticated.

Solicitude

In the women's stories, they all state somehow that the chasm that exists between foreign women in Norway and with Norwegians is manifested daily in terms of a lack of the action of care, or presence of solicitude. Ricoeur writes (1992:183) of the importance for friendships to be based on a real pleasure, as opposed to an expected advantage. This is useful in analyzing the data with regards to solicitude. The participants engage with Norwegians in their communities because they must, and not because they choose to. They choose mostly to interact socially with other foreigners when given the chance. Then, when they do try to interact more intimately with Norwegians, they are not accepted. The participants admit this is the case, and that it creates a dynamic that leaves both sides feeling unconnected: the Norwegians feel like the foreigners in their midst don't respect and enjoy their culture enough, and the foreigners feel ostracized. While they both care theoretically about one another, there is a deeper expression of the care that must be acted out in order for both groups to start to embrace one another. Reciprocity must emerge for an authentic understanding of solicitude to exist in a real manner in everyday life. Ricoeur regards this to be a legacy handed down from Aristotle (1992:187) and believes that there should be "the ethics of reciprocity, of sharing, of living together." This is a theme revolving around an authentically lived intimacy that must come forth out of shared caring for the other. This idea was not a popular concept according to the data collected. There was a pervasive sense of giving up in this regard, which was cause (in their opinion) for the participants to remain separate in their own foreign social sphere. Ricoeur believes that the reciprocity of empathy for the other is a necessary component in caring for the other. He writes (1992:191):

> For it is indeed feelings that are revealed in the self by the other's suffering, as well as by the moral injunction coming from the other, feelings spontaneously directed toward others. This intimate union between the ethical aim of solicitude and affective flesh of feelings seems to me to justify the choice of the term "solicitude"

This idea is carried out further, with the concept of solicitude moving into the idea of similitude. With the analysis of this idea with regards care, it expresses the notion of esteeming others as highly as one regards oneself. Ricoeur writes (1992:193) that "'As myself' means that you too are capable of starting something in the world, of acting for a reason…and that I have worth." An understanding of this idea by the participants could have guided them into thinking more about what they have to offer their Norwegian communities, rather than a focus on bemoaning the feelings that were present in the data of exclusion and apartness. For true solicitude is recognizing that the needs of others are connected to one's own needs. That one's identity cannot remain totally separate, but is tied to that of others. Solicitude is the manifestation in how we are bound together as equals.

One of the underlying currents throughout the conversations is the sense of loss that never leaves their stories. For even when the conversations move into the qualities the participants have learned and gained by moving to Norway, there is still an indelible sadness that does not fade completely. This sentiment does not have to do with permanent relocation per se, but with the notion that the participants have shifted into a culture which does not embrace regular kindness or active concern towards individuals. The participants are longing for a manifestation of solicitude, as well as a place in which they can reciprocate the notion of "care." There is a longing for this caring of others to stretch into everyday action. The participants crave a kind of "belonging" to Norwegian culture; while at the same time acknowledge the alienation that comes from rejecting the inner landscape

of the Norwegian mentality. In their continuing desire for a culture that shows empathy and moral kindness, they express that they feel something is missing, something in which they long to be an active part of (as Becky pragmatically puts it, "you can't squeeze water from a stone"). A kind of ethical substance within their adopted community is wished for.

Heidegger (1962:237) writes, "Being-in the-world is essentially care…and Being with the Dasein-with of Others as we encounter it within-the-world could be taken as solicitude." Anne speaks beautifully of how the there is a divide between the two worlds: the world of Norwegian culture, and the world of shared caring. She says:

> They do not learn empathy here. There is a sort of attitude that if things happen to other people, well, it's good that it didn't happen to me…This is not a country in which people share, but a group of individual souls. They don't reach out to one another. This can make it a painfully lonely place psychologically.

While the moral duty of solicitude is clearly present in how Norway supports humanitarian causes around the world, it is the trickling down into everyday behavior within the small communities and villages that the participants are missing. The participants lament this lack of solicitude when they talk of how Norwegians tend to be rude and unsympathetic. In many of the conversations, the participants conveyed their frustration with this. Ideas around solicitude entered many facets of the conversations, exploring this idea with regards to both personal relationships in addition to local and global organizations. And thirdly, in the sense that they realized that they themselves had the responsibility to manifest care towards their Norwegian communities, but that they felt they were not accepted socially enough in order to do so.

Sophia expresses how she shifts into "Norwegian mode" when she gets on that little plane from elsewhere in Europe that will bring her to Norway. For there are few direct flights from Norway to other continents, usually there is a mid-point in Europe that serves

as the transfer station. And this transfer place becomes not one of mere physical change—from one plane to another—but of a more metaphysical transformation. We talk together of how we put on "Norwegian armor" to make the change into Norwegian life while we are on that plane. For almost all the passengers at that point are Norwegian, so the shift into Norwegian language and behavior begins far before the plane touches Norwegian soil. The solicitude that is longed for is given up here, in order to gain entry back into the "normalcy" of life in Norwegian society. Herda (1999:7) writes of how:

> The identity of an individual is found in a moral relationship with others which, when in aggregate form, makes up more than the sum of the membership. A full and mature sense of self does not stem from a developmental process grounded in individualism but instead arises from a recognition that in one's relationship with others there resides the possibility of seeing and understanding the world, and therefore one's self, differently. When I change, the rest of the world changes.

For Sophia, she feels a metaphysical shift taking place within her—one that does not focus on caring for others, but moving into a more "Norwegian" self-centered world view. She talks about this shift as being one of moral identity as she sits on that small connecting plane that will take her to Norway. For it is while she is flying amidst the clouds and above the forests of northern Europe that she will shift the internal landscape of her being.

Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity is what links moral theory to the theory of action (1992:170). Within the context of telling a story, there is an imaginary space that is created, one in which ideas of moral judgment can be played with in hypothetical circumstances (1992:170). Ricoeur believes (1992:170) that through narrative identity, there is a place in which "ethics would then encompass morality." And it is through this embodiment of solicitude that these qualities can move from being noble thoughts, into being even more noble actions. This is the challenge that exists for the participants: for it is hard to behave authentically with open-hearted solicitude when there is a believed or

imagined stigma. And the data show that this stigma is present in the mindsets of each participant. The more challenging issue is for the participants to take this idea of solicitude, an undercurrent of narrative identity theory, and bring it forward into a place of imagination, a place in which new possibilities can emerge.

Imagination

In committing the participants' stories into a narrative fixed on paper, open to the world, there is a new path that becomes offered to both the participants as well as to the reader. Ricoeur writes (1999:15), "Imagination has two functions: one is to bring us outside of the real world—into unreal or possible worlds—but it has a second function which is to put memories *before our eyes*." In this research, it provides a place for the participants to have a written testimony created, as well as a platform for them to actively contemplate how they see themselves in the world. Ultimately, the theory of narrative identity and imagination are what allow us to see the world with new eyes. And it is with eyes wide open to our dreams for creating a more just world that our actions can change to reflect the awareness and openness towards new possibilities.

For most of the participants, it is difficult for them to re-imagine their life without a change of place in which to couch this transformation. And yet, for each of them, there are transformations that they have made, and great leaps towards their dreams that have been accomplished (even if they themselves to not recognize this). For most, they believe that their experiences in Norway, and the profound influence living there has had upon them has made them a richer and more complex person. A person for whom horizons have deeply shifted. In this manner, they have actively chosen to embrace Ricoeur's (1984:64) "kingdom of as if."

This kind of emplotment is necessary for each of the participants in order to help them continue to accomplish the positive changes they have all made in their lives since moving to Norway. The participants recognize that the social welfare state often seems to stunt the eagerness of members in their communities to seek employment, and yet these women chose to rise above this middle ground of mediocrity and carve out much needed niches for themselves within their small village communities. This is an embodiment of how imagination brings them closer to the worlds they desire. While the scale of their dreams might be on a smaller level, more suited towards smaller communities and populations, they are working in fields they feel adds richness to the world.

For all of the participants, they have managed to create fulfilling professional lives while raising a family—something that is much debated in the West and is no easy task to accomplish in any country. And because having a family is such a strong theme with all the participants within their narratives, the space to imagine rich family lives coupled with a rewarding professional life is one of the main reasons they have chosen to settle in Norway at all.

Gadamer (1988:264-266) argues that the shifting landscapes of our experiences are the very elements that thrust one into the realm of imagination. He writes (1988:264) that time is "a positive and productive possibility of understanding. It is not a yawning abyss, but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which all that is handed down presents itself to us." That within the unfolding of a change in settings, countries and with the passage of time that one can stretch to accommodate unforeseen bounties in the realm of imagination. And that it is through this experience, that (1988:266) "there emerge continually new sources of understanding, which reveal

unsuspected elements of meaning." It is through Ricoeur's (1984:64) "kingdom of as if" idea that the ultimate expression of imagination unfurls: that there comes forth an embrace of Gadamer's premise that (1988:271) "horizons change for a person who is moving." Bernstein poses the question (1983:143) "What are we doing (or rather what is happening to us) when we try to understand a horizon other than our own?" Answering this question is what forces the participants to gaze honestly at how imagination fuels their shift deeper and deeper into a Norwegian consciousness.

The participants are aware that their status as non-refugees is a luxury that allows them to fully engage their imagination when choosing where to live, where to work, and whom to socialize with. There is a sensitivity that is present, and which has a humbling effect on the women. There is a gentleness towards others that each of these participants have, whether to other foreigners living in Norway by choice, or towards refugees in their communities. The solicitude they long for in the Norwegian community is something they themselves manifest in their behavior towards the other foreigners they meet. As if this can be carried forth, and passed on, from foreigner to foreigner.

It is their imagination to keep hoping for a more open and inclusive Norway that allows this solicitude to continue flickering, like the orange-red flame of a candle in the darkness, passed from kind stranger to kind stranger. They are actively creating a world in which they want to be in. They are a living embodiment of Ricoeur's urging (1981:66) that one must put aside prejudice "in order to think, in order to dare to think." And that it is through such self-reflection that internal emancipation occurs (1981:86). In this way, the participants have become the moral agents in the quest for imagining the kind of just and multicultural society they hope to live in, all while staying put with their feet in Norway.

Ricoeur believes that (1981:296) "by opening us to what is different, history opens us to the possible." And that in taking issues of narrative identity into the realm of dreams, there is space for new horizons and the reaching towards uncharted destinations. The intersection of these two ideas is where imagination comes forth, and that in this intersection there is the dynamic force urging (1981:296) "the heart of the real world of action."

While the participants each bring their own understanding of the world (and their own traditions, biases, prejudices) with them into their present world, Kearney (1999:27) reminds us that "Narrative memory is never innocent. It is an ongoing conflict of interpretations…Every history is told from a certain perspective and in the light of specific prejudice…Memory, as suggested above, is not always on the side of the angels." So while one interprets one's story from the understandings that one brings to the world, there is always the possibility to allow these understandings to be broadened by interaction with others. From this interaction, the ensuing process of solicitude brings forth these new understandings, and imagination provides a space in which seeds of change may be planted and new possibilities emerge.

Exploring this meta-narrative through the primary lens of narrative identity creates a way in which the participants can envision a new future for themselves. It is the very interplay between mimesis and the participants' stories that this exciting way to view one's future possibilities unfolds. Kearney reminds us that anyone can imagine a different and new way of being in the world (2002:12-13):

> Narrative thus assumes the double role of *mimesis-mythos* to offer us a newly imagined way of being in the world. And it is precisely by inviting us to see the world *otherwise* that we in turn experience *catharsis*: purgation of the emotions of pity and fear. For while narrative imagination enables us to empathize with those

> characters in the story who act and suffer, it also provides us with a certain aesthetic distance from which to view the events unfolding…. The double vision necessary for a journey beyond the closed ego towards other possibilities of being.

So it is through narrative identity (with the interweaving of story, history and fiction) that imagination plays a powerful role in offering new ways of merging cultures and fostering belonging.

Summary

In this chapter, the lens of critical hermeneutic theory is applied to the data collected in Chapter Five. The first part focuses on the research category of identity, and utilizes the theory of narrative identity to encircle the participants' narratives. This part is told in a three-fold manner, exploring how narrative identity connects to individual voices (Voices Heard), a shift in place (Changing Lifeworld) and the shift in language (Changing Language). The next two parts continue this integration of the narrative theory directly with the data, more fully delving into the ways in which solicitude and imagination emerge from these narratives. The categories in Chapter Five are further explored in Chapter Six with an integration of the theory applied directly to the research data. This provides a deepening of how the research is grounded, and offers glimpses in which to imagine global societies becoming more inclusive, especially with regards to women. New understandings arise, furthered by reflection, critique and a call to take notice. All of this can lead to social action, shifts in policy with regards to policy and curriculum. These issues at hand will be discussed in the final chapter along with a summary, ideas for future research, and concluding reflections.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, PERSONAL REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

This is a study that evolved from many meaningful conversations held with women in Norway regarding issues of culture-change, identity and belonging. While women from all over the world move to Norway to be with their Norwegian partners, they experience a pervasive sense of "disconnect" from Norwegian culture-at-large. Through research involving narrative identity, hermeneutic theory, conversation and refection a re-conception of cultural boundaries is imagined. The borders between old self and new are explored with regards to the emergence of an inclusive cultural lens, one that embraces a fusion of the past, the future, and of the present.

Through these conversations, and the ensuing analysis, reflection and theory emerges an understanding of how the transnational experiences of women provide new perspectives on narrative identity and culture-change. By embarking on a pilot study of the research issue at hand, the journey was begun of delving into the world of the "other" with the intent of finding new understandings—understandings that could be applied towards implementing fresh traditions to aid communities in learning to embrace the unfamiliar.

Following the pilot study comes an exploration of Norwegian culture, so as to frame the issue at hand with an understanding of how Norwegian culture and society imbue the participants' conversations (and lives) with a specific world view. For there is powerful connection between individual identity and cultural belonging, both of which are entwined with the strong current of Norwegian culture in this research. A background of Norway provides glimpses and understanding of a country formed by dramatic nature as well as by

its Viking traditions. For both of these things play a profound role in how modern Norwegians view themselves today. There is a sense of personal connection by most Norwegians to the sea and fjords, to the verdant forests that cover much of the country, and to the harshness of seasons that influence their interactions with one another. These three factors affect how they see themselves in the world, as well as ground them to the very place itself. The geography plays a starring role in understanding Norwegian culture—the religious and cultural traditions, the social welfare state and the development of a communal identity are all tied to intensely unique Norwegian traditions that have arisen from the harsh beauty of the land. The political background of Norway involves a relatively new independence, and thus the sense of patriotism is intense and tangible. Being a country that was governed by others for most of modern history, there is a pride in having become the richest country in Europe, and in having developed a social system in which every citizen is cared for.

Norway's nationalist identity does not conform to its social reality, especially with regards to foreign women in Norway. This hidden discord is explored in light of Norway's history and traditions. The chasm between the inclusive hopes that Norwegian society has for the future is at odds with the reality of its homogenous population and perspective.

In exploring the literature relevant to Norwegian culture, cultural identity, the transnational experience and gender, a stage was set regarding pertinent issues to this research. Critical hermeneutic concepts of identity, solicitude and imagination were explored in relation to these themes. Grounded by both hermeneutic as well as by anthropological theory, a basis for understanding foreign women as the spectacular "other" in Norwegian society is more fully explored. Ideas of Scandinavian sexuality, gender

equality, monotheistic culture and homogeneity are addressed in light of their presence in Norwegian culture today. All of this leads to a deeper understanding of the connection between identity, transnationalism and foreign women in Norway.

Furthering this understanding, the conceptual framework drawing from the works of Ricoeur, Gadamer, Kearney and Arendt were developed in the context of participatory research. This research paradigm is guided by the tenets of critical hermeneutics, involving the collection of data in the primary form of research conversations. These conversations are supplemented by transcriptions, journals and notes. The approach to the analysis of this data was provided, and the entire research process delineated. In addition, my personal background as a researcher was put forth as a voice guiding and influencing this participatory research process.

All of this sets the stage for a new scene: a second act in which a secondary analysis unfolds. For it is in Chapter Five that the data are presented and brought forth into text. Furthering this analysis is the interpretation of the data in light of critical hermeneutics, which in Chapter Six provides a backdrop for hearing the participants' voices not as individual timbres, but as a cohesive choir. In this vein, the researcher functions akin to a choral conductor, finding unified understanding within a group that is made up of singular voices. In this case, while the voices were of varying strengths and qualities, they came together seamlessly, as each called out for the same desire for inclusion, understanding and belonging.

The process of critical hermeneutic inquiry is an intimate one. This research comes forth not only from the specific stories and individual voices of the participants, but also from the perspective that I as the researcher bring to the text. As the participants share

their stories and thoughts with me, I in turn create a text in which their stories unfold for the reader. There becomes an interchange of time, history, participant and narrative.

Listening to the participants' voices as I transcribed the conversations was both powerful and revealing. Powerful in that each participant offered a particular world view of their experience of Norwegian culture, and revealing in that each participant's view of this culture was in concurrence with one another. In this sense, an unusual unified voice within a meta-narrative setting. There was little variation regarding desired outcome or of envisioning how this could offer new implications for policy in organizations, schools and communities. The discordance of the participants' very experience in shifting into a Norwegian culture becomes a unified story of solidarity and yearning. The great question that came forth from me, as the researcher is whether Norwegian society is interested in authentically including these voices of foreigners into their greater community-at-large. For change to occur there is a two-fold shift that would need to happen: they would have to *want* to include the voices of the other, as well as want the greater identity of Norwegian culture to evolve as well. There needs to be a degree of solicitude engaged in order to create a new direction in Norwegian culture that cares to include outsiders. If not, there will continue to remain a great divide, and the talents and individuality of foreigners will remain unutilized and on the fridges of their adopted homogeneous land.

As I listened to the transcribed conversations while still in Norway soon after meeting with the participants, I remembered the extra details not present on tape: their mood, their attitude that day, the weather, their clothing. It's so fresh in my head, and I can analyze the conversation in light of how if feels to be surrounded by the beautiful lush

forests and fjords, as well as by the melodious rhythm of the Norwegian language that surrounds me.

Later, in the United States, as I listen once again to these same conversations I am struck by the thoughtfulness that each participant brings to the questions posed regarding identity, belonging, and culture-change. There are new directions I wish I had pursued in some conversations and this reminds me that as the researcher, my interpretation of the findings plays a role in how they emerge.

After this process of being able to listen to the conversations twice, in different cultural settings—much akin to a play performed twice, but in theaters with drastically differing acoustics, décor and energy— the process of my analysis began to unfold. The ensuing findings and implications are shared in the next section. These findings are envisioned as paths that lead towards creating more inclusive societies and toward guiding cultures into learning to embrace outsiders so that all may benefit.

Findings

1. Desire for Inclusion

After numerous formal conversations, observations drawn from my own time in Norway, and analysis of the data there seems to be a lack of meaningful social integration occurring between foreign women who chose to move to Norway, and Norwegian culture-at-large. While the discrimination is far more subtle than that which the refugees who move to Norway experience, it was a pervasive theme throughout the narratives of each participant.

Each participant eventually found a job in Norway, but for some it took many years. While Becky Hellum is a fluent Norwegian speaker, and has the talent, expertise and drive to take on any job involving fashion, she was not offered a "*fast-stilling*" (full-time, guaranteed job with benefits) until she had searched for10 years. This is ironic, considering she has run multi-million dollar retail clothing businesses in her home country of the U.S.A. There is a tendency to only hire foreign women as temporary workers, not allowing them to become an integral part of their organization, or a more involved part of the social fabric of Norway. And because foreign women are not offered full-time jobs, they do not receive the social welfare benefits that Norwegian women do, such as a year off from work with full salary while on maternity leave. Or their husbands receiving a month off from work with full pay for a paternity leave (which they only may take if their wives are employed with this kind of *fast stilling*). In addition, there is leeway for the husband and wife to exchange roles here, with the husband taking the full year to raise the infant, while the wife goes back to work (or any sharing of that year off may be divided between them)—but only if the wife has a *fast-stilling* job. One participant (Sophia) found such a job within the first year of moving to Norway. Natasha found this kind of job (as a doctor) after trying for 4 years. The other 5 participants have not yet been able to find this kind of guaranteed work (which is the only kind of job most Norwegian women are offered). This discrepancy is indicative of how Norwegian culture unwittingly sets foreign women apart from Norwegian women.

2. Multicultural Identity

While the population of Norway is still overwhelmingly homogeneous, there are a considerable amount of foreigners moving there each year, due to asylum, marriage with a Norwegian national, or to work for several years within a Norwegian business. And yet, the mind-set of the adults is that there is only one correct way of doing things, one "normal" religion (Lutheranism, the State religion), one way of educating young people, and one way of proper social interaction. There is little sense of urging communities to take on a more varied stance towards immigration, integration of foreigners, variance within teaching methodology at schools, and the celebration of holidays other than "Norwegian" ones. Norway seems to be content with regarding itself in a communal and homogenous way, not allowing the foreigner's holidays, traditions, languages, foods and music to establish any kind of healthy roots.

3. Power of the Familiar

The "sameness" of Norwegian culture has the possibility to use this very tendency towards "*gjenta loven*" (all citizens being equal, nobody thinking they are better than anybody else) and to turn it around. What is currently seen as a negative social construct could perhaps be shifted into an idea that embraces the dreams of the participants. The commonly held belief that forced equality is better than a society with drastic wealth and poverty carries over into a belief that commonly shared views and mores are best also for the society. But if views that desired a change towards including foreign traditions were given space to emerge, this too could become a widely-spread generally accepted belief. The pattern and comfort level with state-wide views imported into people's daily lives is an already established idea in Norway. So to use this very habit of people clinging to the

"norms" set by Oslo society and politicians, there could be a merging of outside traditions with those already mandated—but it must come from within the higher echelons of the decision-makers in Oslo.

4. Meaning of Home

One major finding that emerged from this research is that home remains the place of one's birth. Regardless of how long each participant has lived in Norway, when they talk of "home," they speak of their homeland abroad. While they come to use the term home interchangeably (in terms of it meaning both places: the place that they come from, as well as their house in Norway), when asked for clarification, they each described home as truly being where their extended families were. That the ties to the smells of their traditional foods as well as songs sung together for holidays and to mark the passing of life events all carried more resonance only when coupled with the context of their true home. So for the participants, the feeling of living a "dual life" carries over into this very profound concept of home, belonging and national identity.

Implications

Throughout this research process, implications for both curriculum and policy came forth from the data and subsequent data analysis. These implications are inspired from both the participants' own voiced desires for change, as well as by the researcher's lived experience in the realm of the participants' world (as foreign women who have moved to Norway to marry a Norwegian). With an eye towards reaching new understandings, the lessons from foreign women can be integrated into new ideas regarding leadership and educational change.

1. Implications for Curriculum

While there is not official documentation, it is my impression that Norway is increasingly open to foreigners. My suggestion for curriculum may not be embraced currently by the Ministry of Education, however, I am presenting the recommendations below with the hope that these could be considered in the future. Norway has a long history of helping people from around the world, from the early part of the last century continuing into the present. Through both temporary and sometimes permanent asylum, Norway offers those oppressed politically, economically or culturally new opportunities.

There are very few private schools in Norway, and the idea of the privatization of education for children is viewed in a negative light, as elitist and wasteful. Both primary and secondary education is free for all citizens and residents. But there is very little variation in the quality, breadth of discourse, or concepts utilized in teaching methodology. This is partially influenced by the passivity of the students, who do not clamor for individual attention or embrace a competitive academic spirit. This of course comes from the model set by their elders, so in a sense, it is a circular experience of learned behavior. As Agniezska points out, the lack of competitiveness carries over from the children into adulthood, so that there becomes a general contentedness with mediocrity. Sophia as well laments the fact that her two small sons did not receive a dynamic and intellectually stimulating education in the early grades of school. So she found one of the few private schools (as even in Oslo, there are not many) around, and enrolled her children there.

For Becky, whose two children went to school in Larvik, she felt a disconnect from the other parents there, as well as from the teachers (who often resented her suggestions and enthusiastic ideas for outside supplemental involvement—from parents, music and art

specialists, etc..) . There is a general unwillingness to include parent suggestions, as well as a lack of any school-based, extra-curricular activities. Thus, there is little identity shared by those in the same school, or fostered by clubs, teams or school-based organizations. Part of this is because there is already such a strong, unified national identity that little extra in the way of "belonging to Norway" is needed. They are taught to ski, because "*det er norsk til a gå pa ski*" (it's Norwegian to ski) and learn this skill in school, as well as how to ride a bicycle. For many, it's as if belonging to the Club of Norway means that any other connection to groups, individuals or outside concepts is unneeded. But it is a good time to change this perspective, and to create a more varied, inclusive, imaginative, and challenging curriculum for young people as they learn to navigate not only the cold waters of their fjords, but the increasingly global world they will soon be interacting with.

To re-create curriculum, with an eye towards this multi-cultural, global future would help ease the divide between Norwegian and "other." The emergence of a curriculum that focuses on nurturing an active mind, individual thinking, and self-assuredness in participation would be a start in preparing the students to interact with people of varied cultural background. This in turn, would eventually foster greater cultural understanding, less fear of the unfamiliar and increased student exchange programs. Such programs should be sponsored by government outreach organizations, highlighting exchange possibilities in the arts, sciences, and humanities.

2. Implications for Policy

Many of the participants felt that existing policy towards foreigners was that of a benign state that favors Norwegian nationals. While the State takes in new foreigners each year, there is little energy put into integration of these foreigners, so a two-pronged community sometimes begins to emerge. That of Norwegians and that of the refugees. The participants belong to neither, so they lay on the outskirts of both: neither viewed as "*orntly norsk*" (proper Norwegian), nor as undesirable as the refugee group. While the State runs unemployment offices, there are few Norwegian businesses willing to take on a foreigner into it's permanent midst, due to fear of the other, and worry that they will disrupt the cohesive Norwegian work culture that has been established. The Norwegian government should establish a branch of the Culture Department that can focus exclusively on how to fully integrate foreigners into Norwegian culture. Language, social etiquette, community-building events, job placement, family-hosted dinners, international playgroups for children and parents, and clearing-house centers for international culture could all play a role in fostering a better relationship between those who move to Norway for whatever reason, and those who's heritage reaches back for generations—and centuries—to small Norwegian villages.

Policy geared towards integrating foreigners in an established, positive, creative and permanent way would provide new understanding for Norwegians of the diversity of the world outside of Norway. Policy now is focused on protecting Norway's economic interests, in light of its reluctance to join the European Union and its great wealth through North Sea oil revenues. It also has a protectionist bent with regards to maintaining a homogenous population. Instead, I propose that some of this oil money be used to make

Norway a great model for countries working on being leaders in international, multicultural education. And this can only be done by creating a multicultural branch of government that can steer the course of Norwegian education and society into the acceptance of other languages, traditions, experiences, skin colors, religions, mannerisms, etc… Norway is a leader in so many ways—in creating one of the world's most effective social welfare systems, one that has eliminated homelessness, provided shelter to all receive asylum, distributed money each month to families to cover expenses for each child until the age of 18, and free care for all elderly and disabled people. It is a pioneer in some of these ways, such in how it has established free centers for the elderly in the Canary Islands to provide sunshine half the year. It is a leader as well in how it saves and looks towards the future in terms of its financial and economic interests. It is time now to turn this same pioneering, effective, organized and wealthy government towards the frontier of its people: all its people, even the ones who are not Norwegian. With such an approach, I believe that an exciting kind of nascent multiculturalism can organically emerge where traditionally, only whiteness has reigned.

Personal Reflections

While the seeds for this research were planted by the first Norwegian friend I made soon after moving to Sandefjord, Norway, it took many years for its fruition to come to forth. After living in Norway for almost eight years, I moved back to my hometown of Berkeley, California. I was struck by how difficult it was for me to feel completely "American" again. I was surprised to find how much I had changed in my quest to adapt to Norwegian culture. And most importantly, I realized that I belonged to neither place at that juncture of my life.

I kept in close contact with many of my international friends still living in Norway, as the most intimate relationships of my adult life had been fostered during my time as a young, newly married woman living in Oslo. We kept abreast of each other's lives, and I began to realize that I saw parallel stories emerging in the narratives shared with me by my friends there. This prompted me to think deeply about foreign women in Norway, our role in society, what it means to our sense of self when we give up our home country—what it means to our health, our sense of identity and our hopes. What it means in how we chose to raise our children, interact in our marriages, and view other foreigners. I realized that while I might have lost part of who I was (as a dancer, an artist, a member of a big family) I was becoming someone that I admired—who spoke a European language completely fluently (which I had never thought I would accomplish when I first moved there—as it seemed just too difficult), who could even be useful in organizations in Europe as they tried to navigate American-style business constructs. I was becoming proud of myself—but all this changed when I separated from my Norwegian husband, and moved to America as a newly single mother. I felt lost and negated. In starting this research process, I gave voice to both the seven participants, as well as to my own life's story.

Concluding Comments

In taking action to pursue research that is so meaningful to me personally, I believe a new window is opening: one that I can climb through to offer ideas of how to bridge the great chasms existing between cultures today in many countries. I believe policies regarding our government, our military, our local communities and our public education system need to be looked at critically. For racism, violence and misunderstanding is at the root of much of the conflict, both here and abroad. Through a critical hermeneutic

approach, new possibilities of understanding others emerged. This research aspired to open up the quiet world of foreign women living permanently in Norway, with the hopes that such research will bring a new orientation towards inclusivity. Kearney writes (2002:156):

> Every story is a play of at least three persons (author/actor/addressee) whose outcome is never final. That is why narrative is an open-ended invitation to ethical and poetic responsiveness. Storytelling invites us to become not just agents of our own lives, but narrators and readers as well. It shows us that the untold life is not worth living.

The stories of foreign women in Norway allow us all to ask, "Who are we?" and "Where do we belong?" The answers are infinite, with imagination influencing each road one takes, and every journey one begins.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Letter of Introduction

Date

Participant's Name and Title
Address

Dear Mr. /Ms:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an exploration of my dissertation topic. As you know, my research addresses the need to examine the experiences of transnational women in Norway as an educational and social text. More specifically, it is a study to explore the question as to how the individual creates a new identity in shifting cultures. It is my intention to create a text for global citizens to re-imagine the stories told about them by allowing them to retell their own.

I am inviting selected individuals who personally experienced the issues, struggles, and misunderstandings in terms of immigration, language and culture. By engaging in such conversations, I hope that this research will have later implications for helping to unfold new understandings touching upon gender, transnationalism, identity and culture. I reason that these micro perspectives through individual stories made possible through effective conversations will form the sediment. These sediments can be layered as a global whole to provide a newer, macro understanding to the phenomenon of culture change.

In addition to the opportunity to share ideas, I am seeking your permission to record and transcribe our conversations. By signing the consent form, our conversations will act as data for the analysis of the context I have described. Once transcribed, I will provide you a copy of our conversations so you may look it over. You may add or delete any section of the conversation at that time. When I have received you approval, I will use our conversation to support my analysis. Your name and affiliation, the data you contribute, and the date of our conversations will not be held confidential.

Again, thank you for your willingness to meet. Please call (510) 594-2533 or email me at tamarlarsen@yahoo.com if you have any further questions. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Most sincerely,

Tamar Larsen
Researcher, Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco
Organization and Leadership

Appendix B- Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO (USF)

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Tamar Larsen, in the USF School of Education, has asked me to be a participant in her research, which explores the issues surrounding identity and culture change of foreign women who move to Norway.

B. PROCEDURES

In agreeing to be in this study, I will participate in conversation with Tamar Larsen regarding my own experiences living in Norway. The conversations will be arranged at my convenience and will last between one and two hours. I agree that Tamar Larsen may audiotape record the conversations, which will then be transcribed.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

I am free to decline to answer any question or to stop the conversation and my participation at any time. I am also free to request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point during the conversation. I understand that my name and data generated by me may be published in the dissertation and any subsequent publications.

D. BENEFITS

I understand that I may benefit from the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon my experiences doing this work. General benefits may include an increased understanding of my own needs, contributions and desires since moving to Norway—a better understanding of who I now am because of my relocation to Norway. This may lead to recognition of the

need to re-draw social boundaries still present in homogeneous countries in terms of policy and education.

E. ALTERNATIVES

I am free to choose not to participate in this study.

F. COSTS

There will be no costs to me as a result of participating in this study.

G. QUESTIONS

If I have any questions or comments about the study, I may contact Tamar Larsen at her home at 6015 Auburn Avenue, Oakland, California, 94618, or by telephone at (510) 594-2533, or by email at tamarlarsen@yahoo.com I may also contact her advisor Dr. Ellen Herda, at the University of San Francisco at (415) 422-2075. Should I not want to address comments to either of them, I may contact the office of Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects

From: irbphs (irbphs@usfca.edu)
To: tamarlarsen@yahoo.com
Date: Tuesday, April 22, 2008 10:51:33 AM
Cc: Ellen Herda
Subject: IRB Application # 08-043 - Application Approved

April 22, 2008

Dear Tamar Larsen:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #08-034). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.

2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.

3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your researeh.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

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IRBPHS University of San Francisco
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http://www.usfca.edu/humansubjects/

Appendix C- Sample Thank You Letter

Date

Participants Name

Address

Dear Ms.,

I would like to thank you for taking part in my dissertation research regarding foreign women moving to Norway. I thank you not only for taking the time to have conversations with me, but for offering your own personal stories, opinions, insights and reflections pertaining to yourself within the Norwegian context. It is my hope that the research undertaken in this project will lend itself to two important functions: in bringing your voices to the forefront of a discussion involving trans-cultural women (and women who make permanent relocations abroad), and in offering new views for policymakers regarding immigration and integration of foreigners.

You have all played an integral part of my own journey in this research process, and I thank you for both your time and your energy.

Yours,

Tamar Larsen

Appendix D- Transcript from Pilot Study

Mary Andersen was visiting the Bay Area (her place of origin) for Thanksgiving, and in honor of her father's 70th birthday. We met at my home in Berkeley, CA. for tea and conversation.

T.L.: Mary, it is go great, but so strange to be doing our usual thing, but here in the States! Being in a different setting takes some getting used to after your quiet life in Norway, yes?

M.A.: The hectic pace of life back here in the Bay Area is so strange to me now. But seeing you feels the same—no matter where we are. So, in that way, it's reassuring to be with you here. There really aren't that many people in the States that I am still close with. And certainly none that can understand how different my life in Norway is—and how different I am because of adjusting to living in Norway.

T.L.: What are some of the most striking or powerful differences that come to mind?

M.A.: Well, in a good way- all the diversity, the people of different colors and cultures. Living here in Berkeley more or less in harmony. That is something that just doesn't happen in Norway. While there are more foreigners coming, usually they are refugees. So they feel unprepared for life in Norway, unwelcome there, and in a limbo due to their political inbetween-ness. While I relate to feeling inbetween and inbetwixt, I have the luxury of being more accepted as a blond American, and also as an English-speaker. There is great prejudice against people who speak an African language, or in Urdu or Bosnian (which are the two you mostly hear from refugees). As hard as I sometimes have it, these folks have much more to deal with.

T.L.: Yes, sometimes this is easy to forget, when complaining with other foreign women in Norway, as we got so wrapped up in our own travails.

M.A.: Yup. Not to discount that it is really tough sometimes. More in a psychological way. It's scary to actually get used to-- and take on as a natural way—that people won't talk to you. Even when you speak to them first—in the post office, or in the grocery store, they pretend they don't hear you. I still get frustrated, even after 18 years in Norway, how Norwegians are afraid of strangers. I know it must come from something deep within their culture, but it's so awful to experience, time after time.

T.L.: I remember once doing an experiment when I first lived in Oslo, in 1997. I tried asking strangers in the fancy part of town (Frogner, on the West Side of the city) for directions to a boutique. Most people ignored me. Maybe some thought I would ask them for money? Or that I was Pakistani? They are not very nice to the Pakistani citizens there. Why do you think this is?

M.A.: It's not just the Pakistanis. Norwegians aren't nice to anyone they don't know. It's just not a part of their D.N.A.! They don't mean harm either, it's just a kind of deliberate

blindness. And they feel taken advantage of by many refugees too. In terms of the generous State-run social welfare system. There are many articles in *Aftenposten* (the country-wide major newspaper) that highlight how the system gets swindled out of so much money. And I understand how Norwegians feel about that too. But they invite foreigners to come, and then don't integrate them in any authentic way into the community. So, they set them up for failure.

T.L.: How do you see Norwegian society could embrace foreigners more—both for refugees as well as for women like us?

M.A.: For the refugees, it's more complicated. Give them JOBS! Not just places to live, but the means to recreate their lives in a meaningful way. They need self-respect, not just hand-outs. For women like us, it's more subtle, but equally important. We can't continue to be held at the sidelines, like privileged thoroughbreds who aren't allowed to race. As Westerners, and as people married to Norwegians, we aren't as suspect of taking advantage of "the system" (of social welfare), but neither are we included into the fabric of society. The *jenta clubben* (girls clubs formed in childhood that last into adulthood), the difficulty in getting *faststilling* (full-time jobs).

T.L.: Yes, I remember how hard it was to get a full-time job, the ones with all those great benefits that the world reads about. With the five weeks of paid leave, with one year maternity leave etc… we don't get all that.

M.A.: I know, and the world things that stuff goes to everyone who lives there, but it isn't so. And then when we try to get creative, and start our own businesses, they aren't interested. You know how Norwegians are about new things! They are so threatened by them. Instead of embracing something, and being open to a new, exciting product of concept, they are suspicious. This is one of the most negative qualities I find about this culture. And you can't fight it. That's too exhausting. I tried, when I had that deli in Horten.

T.L.: I remember hearing about how you tried to have a real, American/Italian style deli! Gosh, that would have been so great! You were ahead of the times. Maybe there are ready for that now, as more Norwegians are better-travelled now, but now then, huh?

M.A.: Yeah, maybe that's true. Also, I think something like that has to be in a bigger town. Maybe a real city! Horten is too small—both in population and in mentality. And as for Asgardstrand (the small beach town community where Mary lives), forget it!

T.L.: I remember how I longed for warm chocolate-chip cookies in Norway. I thought seriously about opening a Mrs. Field's type place. But I figured something like that could only work in Oslo, where more young people knew about American great cookies. Can you imagine the stampede for free tastes outside? Like they used to do initially at the Mrs. Field's franchises in the malls in the States?

M.A.: Oh God, that would be hysterical! Free food is so unheard of. But that goes along with a generosity of spirit. And while there are many things I love about this culture, that is not one of them.

T.L.: Just to switch gears for a moment. Where is home for you now? When you use the word home, where is the place that comes to mind? And which language is easier to use in intimate conversation? I'd love to hear any of your thoughts on theses subjects, as well as any experiences you'd like to share.

M.A.: Oh boy. Those are good questions. Home is definitely Norway. I mean, I have my husband and children there. I gave birth to my babies there.

T.L.: Do your children see themselves as half-American? Or all Norwegian?

M.A.: They are Norwegian. But in a secondary kind of way, they know they are also American. There English is fluent. I am really happy, and kind of relieved that that happened naturally. Because so many of my other American friends in Norway don't have kids who speak great English. As to me, that negates a big part of their heritage. It kind of freaks me out, but then, maybe not everyone feels so connected to where they come from. I just think speaking to one's newborn child in one's native language is a profoundly telling part of how one sees oneself in the world. Also, for me, I didn't even speak Norwegian that great until the kids were a little older. And by then, we'd been doing everything at home in English. So, I am lucky in that I never had to over-intellectualize that particular issue.

T.L.: When did you start to think of Norway as your home?

M.A.: I think I figured in a practical sense, that it was my home as soon as Dag and I got married, and we moved back here together after our cruise-ship years—as you know that's how we met, right? We worked on the ships for about 7 years. He was the chief steward and I did retail. That's another thing—the whole Viking sailing culture. They have it in their blood. Their attraction to the sea is such an innate thing. And for foreign women married to career sailors, we are alone here so much of the time. But since the men have been bringing back foreign brides for so long, it's not looked at as strange. O.K., what did you even ask me?

I haven't been home in almost 10 years, so I guess that says a lot. I mean, in addition to having drama with my family, who rarely come to visit me here, I just no longer feel that connected to the States. The very rhythm of life is so different here. I feel now as if I am very European, in my approach to life, work, family and such. Although I must say, I think my values are still pretty much American. But because I come from the Bay Area, they are quite liberal for America, and therefore closer to a European sensibility.

T.L.: Yes, I felt that too. That being a "little bit European". It was disconcerting, but exciting as well- like it was a part of my new identity having lived so long in Norway—which is only on the fridges of Europe in so many ways.

M.A.: I think I am definitely now a combination of all three of my histories: my past life in the Bay Area, my wild and crazy days on the cruise ship, and my life as a wife and mother in Norway. But I do see this last part as the most important part of my life. This might be simply because it's the part I am living in right now. It is my most powerful reality. It is also what has tested me the most, in so many ways. But I suppose it is only later in my life when I will be able to look back at all of these parts, and see which left the biggest imprint on my personality and on how I see the world.

T.L.: About Norway really feeling like home. And do you ever feel a bit Norwegian yourself now?

M.A.: In a deeper way, Norway felt like home after a few years. After I made friends, and felt a part of something. I mean, we all crave belonging to a community, right? No matter where we are or where we come from, this desire to be accepted is a powerful tool. It's not about just having a home here; it's about something much more intangible. But it feels very good to belong here—as much as I can ever belong, that is. I belong to myself here, and am finally comfortable in my own boots. But I think it helps that I don't need to be around people all the time, and that I really like my solitude.

T.L.: I know Dag (Mary's husband) is often away and that you actually like this freedom, this time on your own.

M.A.: I like having my space. I like having my house to myself, my whole day to only deal with my own stuff. I don't really even miss him when he is gone—I know that sounds terrible to someone who doesn't have a husband who is regularly at sea—but I like this rhythm. I know he loves me, but I wouldn't always want him around. It's the ideal marriage in many respects: I know he always comes home to me, but I get my freedom too.

T.L.: How long did it take you to learn Norwegian? For me, I think if I'd learned the language faster, I would have had a much easier time! And I certainly would have liked living in Norway sooner. That would have been great. But "would haves and could haves" just leave us wistful and sad.

M.A.: School was never my thing. I never went to college, or liked the idea of those language classes for foreigners they have here (in Norway). I just picked it up after a few years somehow. It kind of soaks into your psyche. Learning a language is as much about understanding the people as it is about actually learning the mechanics of a new vocabulary. Luckily, I was too busy at home with the little ones to worry about it.

T.L.: I think maybe I should have had a baby sooner—that would have kept me busy! I was so lonely those first few years. My Norwegian wasn't great until I'd been there about 3-4 years, so I really struggled to find things to do.

M.A.: But you were so good about creating your own jobs, with all those dance classes and English classes…

T.L.: Thanks! Yes, once I got going and built a little of a reputation in Sandefjord and Tonsberg, it was really terrific. Ironically, life in Oslo was the harder part.

M.A.: Oslo leaves much to be desired!

T.L.: And to think that I insisted that we live there! I hated the smallness of Sandefjord at first. Who would have thought I would grow to love it?!

M.A.: Well, look at me at the edge of the world in Asgardstrand! I think we adjust to the smallness, and even begin to crave it.

T.L.: Yes, that's so true. I used to think of myself as a "city gal". But now, after so many years in a small town, I now crave to reproduce this dynamic. Lord help me—sometimes I even wonder if there's a touch of the "Stockholm Syndrome" there. The very thing I used to hate, I now long for.

M.A.: That's a funny way to put it. But I understand. I would never want to live here in the Bay Area now. The very multicultural-ness of it is completely overwhelming and almost scary. Now that's an insidious, negative part of Norway that has seeped into me. Gotta watch that. But yeah, after being a real world-traveler, working on the cruise ships, it's strange to think that my world is now so small.

T.L.: When I first saw your town, I thought it was awful! But now, I could even see myself living there myself! Talk about transformation. That's scary.

M.A.: Well, our own sense of self goes through such a dramatic transformation living here. We adjust in order to survive. We adjust enough in order to be accepted. I guess that's a kind of survival instinct.

T.L.: Yes, as it's not so much physical survival, but psychological survival.

M.A.: Yeah, and the Norwegian tendency to isolate oneself is catching! I find I am much more introverted now, even though that is not my natural leaning. And I wait for people to start conversation with me, instead of initiating them-- which I never used to do! I have definitely become more "Norwegian". And while this is normal—adjusting to life's circumstances, when I am back here in the States, I can see that this isn't so good. I am not as kind, or as nice as I used to be. More closed in.

T.L.: When I was there this summer, at the *Handelsdagen* shopping day celebration, it was just so strange. I was so happy that there were lots of people about—but at the same time, it's just a "normal" day in Berkeley to see lots of folk interacting and shopping and laughing. Yet in the Norwegian context, they need a special day to relax and interact. As if they need special, government-sanctioned permission!

M.A.: Or in this case, "community-issued permission"! Yes, I wish they could let loose without alcohol being such an issue. They always need either alcohol or somebody to give them permission to behave in a different way from their everyday manner. This is a kind of passivity that seems to be a big part of who they are. Not a part that's healthy to adopt, I might add!

T.L.: Yeah, otherwise we'll become a part of the summertime "Stepford Wives" group that you see sitting at the café. All dressed alike, with little pert kerchiefs at their necks, with short blond-gray hair and matching rhinestone-bedecked t-shirts with a fancy label…

M.A.: I hate that group-dressing mentality. That's pretty pervasive here. Being a bohemian Bay Area gal myself, that drives me crazy. I just don't get caught up in that particular thing. But being kind of isolated in my little town helps in that way. Well—that would go back to how I see myself. So I guess while I see this as "home", in some ways my roots will always show through.

T.L.: You mean, in terms of how you dress, and keeping your bohemian spirit?

M.A.: Yes, and what that says about how I view life, and my role in Norwegian community. As much as I just do my own thing, I don't mind that they see me as a slight interloper, or non-conformer. Maybe that very spirit was instilled in me growing up in the Bay Area, where being a non-conformer is very much viewed as a good thing there. So, a little part of me will always be a Bay Area person.

T.L.: Yes, as how we act, dress ourselves put ourselves out there in the world says so much about who we are.

M.A.: Yeah, and in this case, it just depends on how much energy I have at my disposal! As sometimes I am just too tired to fight! I mean, being different here takes a lot of energy. There's a fine line between being a total loner, and being exiled from the community. And while I like having my own style, privacy and life, neither do I was to be unaccepted by Norwegian society. That would be awful. Especially in the winter when people really don't talk much! Unless they are drinking, of course. You know how that is.

T.L.: Yeah, the alcohol issue was a big shock for me. I knew in an abstract sense that alcoholism was a big part of Scandinavian/Russian life. But I don't come from a drinking culture. So dealing with it was hard. But then, dealing with alcoholics is always hard I think, no matter where you are. The main difference is that alcoholism is even defined differently here, so that it's actually acceptable. They actually manipulate the definition so that they don't have to change their behavior. That goes along with the lack of taking responsibility for their actions I sometimes find. A kind of combination of "passing the buck" with plain old emotional immaturity.

M.A.: Well, I won't argue with that! I think every foreign woman I know here has a partner with alcohol issues. That's a really hard one. And I do agree with you on the

passivity thing. That drives me nuts. It's often the foreigners who reach out to help someone who's tripped at the train station, or to an elderly lady who needs help in the grocery store. Norwegians don't help unless directly asked.

T.L.: I remember how odd that was during my first years in Oslo, jumping in to help an old lady at the market or something, when I wasn't even sure what she was saying to me! While Norwegians nearby understood her perfectly, but weren't' offering to help. I found that so confusing and strange. But that was before I learned not to ask "why" here!

M.A.: Ha! Yes, that's a big lesson we all learn after a while. You don't ask "why". Like, why isn't there any fresh basil in the city? Or why haven't they heard of "pecan nuts"

T.L.: Or why don't they put salt or gravel on the sidewalks so that we don't break our necks in the wintertime on the ice!

M.A.: You'll be happy to know that in Oslo- the Big Bad City- they are actually putting in heating cables along Bogstaveien so melt the ice.

T.L.: You mean, they skipped the old-fashioned salt and gravel thing, and moved right to high-teching it!

M.A.: Yeah, but that's only on the main drags. The rest of the city even there is still covered in ice during the winter. I guess storekeepers are too cheap to use salt and shovel the sidewalks clear.

T.L.: I found that my best friends in Norway were other foreign women. I only had one or two best Norwegian friends, and they were exceptionally cosmopolitan and well-traveled women.

M.A.: That's more than I can say. My closest friends are all other foreign women. I think we understand each other's experiences, and that is a kind of bond between us that Norwegian women can't relate to. Also, I am more comfortable using English with my friends, and while Norwegians all speak English, most don't like to use it much.

T.L.: I learned to stop reaching out so much to people. That when my behavior reflected the more closed Norwegian culture, that my life was easier. This is probably because I had soaked in my bones all the little rules in addition to the language of the society. The more I actually could speak Norwegian, the better my understanding of how they thought was.

M.A.: Yes, and I am even more introverted than you. I love how you still are so friendly and engaging, even if you don't think you are. But it's true, the more you have of the language, the more you understand why they act the way they do. Those two things are entangled. I find I need less from Norwegian culture, as my life there is so self-contained. But I think I do that purposely, so that I don't miss as much all the zest and life that I see here in Berkeley. When you put what is possible out of your mind, it is easier to accept the limitations of life in Norway. But I don't think I will ever truly understand or like how

such an inwardness of spirit in Norway creates a culture that is so cold. To be afraid of foreigner, afraid of new foods, afraid of new languages and traditions—it sometimes does drive me nuts. But then, that's why I do my best to put it out of my mind. It's my survival technique.