

International Marriages between Latin Women and Norwegian Men

Itzel Margot Toro Garza



**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Philosophy in
Gender Studies**

Centre for Gender Studies

University of Oslo

Blindern, Norway

14/11/2023

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1. Introduction

In the spring of 2013, precisely a decade ago, my parents decided to relocate from Mexico to the United States. At that time, I was seventeen years old and eagerly anticipating the transition to adulthood in a foreign country. As a female Latin American¹ immigrant in the United States, I encountered extraordinary experiences and opportunities. Owing to the substantial Latin American immigrant population in the United States, I adapted expeditiously to my new environment; however, despite my largely positive experiences, I only felt partially embraced by society. This sentiment persisted even after my parents secured their American residency when I remained ineligible due to my age exceeding twenty-one years. To be considered a part of my parent's immigration case, I needed to be under twenty-one. While I felt integrated into society, the bureaucratic immigration system forced me to navigate my path to obtaining legal residency in the U.S.

Although the Child Status Protection Act² allowed my parents to petition on my behalf subsequently, the projected waiting time for Mexican citizens to obtain permanent residency through those means could exceed a decade, and it presented a daunting challenge (USCIS). Alternative pathways to American citizenship, such as job visas and marriage, were not viable options for me, as my primary focus was pursuing my education in my newfound passion for gender studies. After completing my bachelor's degree, I relocated to Norway to obtain a master's degree in gender studies. A minor yet significant motivation for the move was the desire to escape the invisible walls that separated me from my parents and other American citizens and the lingering feeling of not wholly belonging to a place I considered home after many years of trying to do so.

My research journey began with my move from New York to Oslo for my master's. Amidst this dramatic change in atmosphere during an already tumultuous time of COVID-19 uncertainty, I had the chance to reconnect with a part of my extended family, my distant cousin. She was the daughter of my grandfather's brother. She served

¹ I use Latin American to describe a person living in countries of the American continent where "Spanish or Portuguese is the main language" (Latin America).

² According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) In the United States, "the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) defines a child as a person who is both unmarried and under 21 years old. If someone applies for lawful permanent resident (LPR) status as a child but turns 21 before being approved for LPR status (also known as getting a Green Card), that person can no longer be considered a child for immigration purposes."

as a consul in the Mexican Embassy in Oslo. Excited to learn more about my cousin, I arranged a meeting; however, as I sat across from her in her dining room, my expectations of discussions about diplomatic anecdotes, international policies, and global politics were swiftly swept away. As my cousin talked, the topic slowly drifted away to something I would have never anticipated.

Initially expecting conversations about diplomatic meetings, I traveled through her stories of deep community involvement with Mexican women in Norway; nonetheless, there was still an essence of her consular role between her words, revealing engagements far above administrative tasks. My initial confusion arose from the difference between her narratives of community involvement and my expectations of her consular duties, seemingly limited to paperwork and bureaucracy. Two years later, I realized that my cousin's role as a diplomatic consul was much more than just processing paperwork; it was very active in helping guide other Mexican women. Of course, my cousin guided these women through embassy procedures, but her duties required much more than that. A discomfiting fact became clear to her: many Mexican women otherwise relied entirely on their romantic partners. She witnessed deception and manipulation in her interactions with these women. Ultimately, she served as a vital lifeline to women who moved to another country and faced linguistic, cultural, and social barriers.

Within six months of my move to Oslo, my cousin's brief overlap was coming to a close. She decided to move to the U.S. to pursue a new opportunity. She moved to Washington, D.C., to further her diplomatic career. Nevertheless, our seemingly casual discourse upon my arrival still echoes in my memory. Our conversations subtly but significantly altered the path of my academic journey as a master's student at the University of Oslo, infusing a new direction and purpose into my master's thesis plans as I became more conscious of the power dynamics that exist universally around the world for women.

The following chapter expounds the background information for my study before introducing my thesis. Later on, I use an intersectional feminist lens to introduce an analysis concerning the experiences of Latin American women who are married to Norwegian men. I will also discuss the critical thesis question and define the research's theoretical frameworks in the proceeding sections.

1.1 Research Gap

This master's thesis looks to address a significant research gap in the experiences and challenges faced by Latin American women who migrate to Norway for family reunification with their Norwegian husbands. "The existing literature provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by marriage migrants, such as social isolation, limited access to support networks, and potential exploitation within their marital relationships" (Fleury 3). While there is substantial research on transnational marriages in Norway, the focus has primarily been on Thai and Russian women, leaving the experiences of the 27,073 Latin American immigrants living in Norway overlooked (Statistics Norway). This research project seeks to amplify the voices of Latin American women in Norway, including those of Indigenous, African, and European descent, on the immigration difficulties they encounter during the family reunification permit process. By examining the legal requirements, bureaucratic procedures, and cultural barriers these women face, this thesis contributes to the existing literature on transnational marriages and migration.

1.2 Objectives and Significance of the Study

The main objective of this study is to address the research gap in the experiences and challenges faced by Latin American women who migrate to Norway for family reunification with their Norwegian husbands. By focusing on this immigrant group and examining their different situations, this research looks to amplify their voices and the immigration difficulties they may encounter during the family reunification permit process. Through an analysis of legal requirements, bureaucratic procedures, and cultural barriers, this research will provide insights into the experiences, objectives, and methodologies employed in understanding the unique challenges Latin American women currently face in transnational marriages in Norway.

The significance of this study is in its contribution to the existing body of literature on transnational marriages and immigration in Norway. By focusing on the experiences of Latin American women, this thesis looks to provide insights into the impact of immigrant status and power dynamics on agency, freedom, and autonomy.

Furthermore, this research sheds light on the impact of immigrant status and power dynamics on agency, freedom, and autonomy within Latin-Norwegian marriages. By examining the sociocultural dynamics at play, I seek to provide a nuanced understanding of the experiences of Latin American women and contribute to developing interventions and support systems that cater to their specific needs.

In the subsequent chapters, this thesis delves into the literature review, theoretical background, methodology, interviews, and analysis of the findings. I will review relevant literature, examine theoretical frameworks, discuss the research methodology, present interview findings, and conclude with implications for policies and future research.

1.3 Research Questions

My main research question is: how do Latin American women in transnational marriages in Norway experience agency under their immigration process? My objective is to investigate Latin American women's experiences and potential vulnerabilities upon their arrival in Norway and how power dynamics within their transnational marriages and immigrant statuses might impact their agency, individual freedom, and autonomy. I want to understand the impact of their immigrant status and power dynamics on their agency, freedom, and autonomy. My study aims to address the following sub-questions: What are the specific immigration difficulties faced by Latin American women during the family reunification permit process? How do legal requirements, bureaucratic procedures, and cultural barriers affect their experiences? What are the motivations and outcomes of their migration? How do power dynamics, dependency factors, and coping strategies influence their agency and individual freedom? By exploring these questions, my thesis aspires to address the existing research gap concerning Latin American women in Norway and to expand the discourse on international marriages by examining the experiences of these women through their unique perspectives. Specifically, I want to explore Latin American immigrants' vulnerabilities upon arriving in Norway and investigate how power dynamics within their transnational marriages and immigrant statuses impact their agency, individual freedom, and autonomy.

To explore these questions, I conducted in-depth interviews with four women from diverse regions in Latin America who were residing in Norway and married to Norwegian citizens. These interviews aimed to collect their personal stories and

experiences, providing insight into their transnational marriages, immigration-related challenges, and their pursuit of autonomy.

1.4 Conclusion

In this first chapter, I presented my thesis's objectives, contextualized it within the landscape of Norwegian migration and Gender Studies, and underscored the demographic for this analysis: Latin American women married to Norwegian men who qualified as a family under a family reunification permit in Norway. This chapter served as an introduction to the research project, outlining the scope and focus of the study on Latin American women in transnational marriages in Norway.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

2.1 Transnational Marriages

Transnational marriages, where individuals from different countries marry and relocate, blend diverse ethnic, social, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Gernsheim 7). These unions are characterized by unique dynamics due to the varied experiences of the partners involved. Such marriages are often motivated by desires to find partners with similar values, maintain cultural and familial ties, and improve economic prospects (7). Latin American women may find several motivations to seek out these marriages within this framework. A sense of camaraderie and shared values across borders, the prospect of having different socioeconomic outcomes with a more cosmopolitan individual, and a desire to leave stressful political climates instead of stability.

At baseline, transnational couples often have to navigate cultural differences and legal and bureaucratic struggles and cope with the emotional distress of being separated from their previous environment. Latin American women must overcome linguistic, cultural, and social barriers to integrate into new societies (Gernsheim 7). Bureaucratic processes create a fundamental stressor for the survivability of transnational marriages, as they must be government-sanctioned to thrive. When Western democratic governments view these marriages as null or incompatible with culture and values, they may impose restrictions to limit their occurrence. This acts as a limitation for transnational marriages (Gernsheim 15). Western governments may look at these marriages as a way for the new immigrant to create unwanted shifts socially and culturally within their society, furthering the narrative of ostracizing such acts and reinforcing prohibition.

Transnational marriages also serve as a way to manage risk for individuals. They may help reinforce kinship obligations and emotional ties, be a viewpoint for immigrant

families to perceive a greater availability of candidates and be motivated by a desire to establish gender relations within a particular geographic imagining (Nadim, 2). It is helpful to note that often, the literature has understood the role of gender within these marriages to signify this concept of a “mail-order bride.” However, the term does not encapsulate the vast array of motivations for Latin women and overlooks the complexity of transnational marriages (Kim 718-719). This is especially relevant in the context of gendered local cultural meanings of heterosexual marriage, which interrogates the role of gender and culture as driving forces for these marriages.

2.2 Why Intersectionality?

Intersectionality theory originates from black, feminist, and other women of color theories and focuses on the interplay between social categories and power. Sue and Riosmena (5) describe intersectionality as "Intersectionality theory has been used to describe how socially constructed categories embedded in structural relations of power interact in mutually constitutive ways to produce intersecting forms of disadvantage." This explanation underlines the essence of intersectionality, which goes beyond the simple intersection of gender and race. Specifically, intersectionality encompasses a broader spectrum of intersecting identities and oppressions. This approach highlights the unique disadvantages experienced by individuals at these intersections. Rooted in the experiences of black women and other women of color, Intersectionality theory is dedicated to uncovering the depths of systemic inequality and its various effects on marginalized individuals and groups.

Within Kimberlé W. Crenshaw's intersectionality frameworks, we can examine the lives of Latin American women in Norway who are part of transnational marriages in a manner that tells the complex hierarchies and power relations that permeate their experiences. According to Crenshaw, intersectionality "is a theoretical framework which maintains that elements such as race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality map onto strata within social hierarchies where they interact and intertwine" (Muirhead et al. 465). The intersectional theoretical framework highlights how these factors intersect and impact the experiences of migrant women, significantly influencing their access to power and resources in Norwegian society.

I chose intersectionality as a primary theoretical framework as it allows for examining the diversity in Latin America. Historically, Latin America has experienced immense immigration as a result of colonization, migration, and forced and voluntary immigration from European, Asian, and African nations. Additionally, these nations have experienced different international and domestic relations that have resulted in varying successes politically and economically. Accordingly, each woman who immigrated to Norway, or any other country, is a representation and product of these diverse upbringings. Intersectionality allows these conditions to be considered and does not reduce these women to a monolith. Additionally, considering that no person is one aspect of their identity, a lens of intersectionality enriches this investigation and allows for many strands of investigation to be opened up. This will be examined more in-depth in the following section.

2.3 Intersectionality in Latin America

The region of Latin America and its inhabitants are vastly diverse. Aside from Portuguese, Spanish is the primary language spoken in Latin America. Many Spanish-speaking countries also have a sizable population of Indigenous language speakers and other multilingual residents, often due to family migration from another country. Each country in Latin America has a different social strata and a different spectrum of diverse factors of its people. Intersectionality utilizes many factors of an individual's life in a particular place and time to demonstrate the context of their life in the society they are surrounded by. Issues of race, class, and ethnicity have been inherent to Latin American feminism and feminist theory from its inception (Vuola 138). These factors must be first understood at the individual scale and then looked at collectively to understand the social hierarchy of an immigrant's home country. Intersectionality is an Anglo-Saxon term that "can also be used in the Latin American context if it clarifies and gives structure to at least some intentions to theorize gender in the multiethnic and class-divided Latin American continent" (139). While an intersectional lens could be applied to any analysis of a society, an intersectional analysis must be considered in the Latin American context.

Latin Americans are often broadly categorized by their country of origin, but within each country exist different religious, linguistic, socioeconomic, and gender

dynamics and cultural norms. For instance, applying an intersectional perspective has played a crucial role in revealing the complex nature of inequality in Mexico, as “recent studies of the intersection of race/ ethnicity/ phenotype and gender ... suggest that intersectionality is an essential lens for understanding inequality” and power dynamics in the region (Sue et al. 492). It is necessary to consider a Mexican person’s ethnicity, appearance, and gender identity to understand the context of a person within Mexican society. As an example, Indigenous people in Mexico may experience discrimination that leads to social, economic, and structural inequalities compared to their peers. “Compared to indigenous men and non-indigenous women, indigenous women suffer higher levels of socioeconomic disadvantage” and marginalization due to the intersection of their indigenous identity and gender (492). Therefore, this theoretical tool is not just applicable but is indispensable for articulating how various forms of discrimination compound and interact in the lives of Mexican women and, more broadly, Latin American women.

Individual characteristics are often closely related or intertwined with levels of education. In Latin America, the socioeconomic context and education play a role in shaping an individual’s self-perception of ethnicity as an implicit recognition of the role of inequalities in shaping ethnic self-perception (Paschetta 10). In other words, an individual’s understanding of their context in their country may be impacted by their level of education. Even within Latin American immigrant communities abroad, including Latin American women in transnational marriages, there may be variations in how individuals perceive and identify with their ethnic background and environment. An individual’s self-identification ability highlights the importance of considering intersectionality in understanding their experiences and identities.

2.4 Intersectionality in Transnational Marriages

As intersectionality shapes within the threads of social identities—gender, race, class—each contributes to the unique pattern that characterizes the lived realities of these Latin American women. The power structures in transnational marriages are affected by gendered power dynamics, which operate within a patriarchal framework and may result in “unequal distribution of household labor, decision-making authority, and economic resources” (Kim 723). This distribution may manifest as an uneven division of

domestic duties, while in the public domain, it could limit their participation in labour markets or social networks.

A read into the intersectionality framework shows us that there are multidimensional axes of inequality and intersections (Gross 67). For many people, a transnational marriage may be inherently unequal. Inequality can be identified from multiple areas to contextualize the individual's experience. A metric for their conceptual and methodological ideation surrounding inequality must be considered in the literature to ascertain how inequality affects an individual entirely. This presents a vital qualification within the quantitative and qualitative analysis that is necessary to interrogate the inequities and facets of intersectionality thoroughly.

Education, in particular, provides a foundation for how many inequities manifest for these women. Women within particular professions, such as nursing or schooling, may have lower income and prestige than male-dominated professions (Gross 175). These inequalities have important implications for individuals who do not have a background in higher education or a background within non-male-dominated professions, as they may face a different valuation within the context of transnational marriages. These horizontal differences may translate into the quality of education, or lack thereof, that women may receive compared to their male counterparts, significantly limiting their ability to be financially independent. Financial dependence or independence in a transnational marriage impacts a person's ability to adapt to cultural and societal normative behaviors. Some of the most notable are heteronormative and patriarchal narratives that then further perpetuate and sustain a system of inequalities. A combination of educational institutions, placement within tracks, and achievement by grades, scores, and credentials are all identifiers within this context that must be considered for how perception may be affected in international marriages. Transnational marriages may be targets of political discrimination, and perception of status may significantly impact transnational marriages' ability to be successful.

Independently, it is essential to understand that the impact of having educational systems linked to a meritocratic society may further reproduce inequalities between social origin and destination class. This means that life outcomes (which are heavily linked to income), political participation, health, subjective well-being, life expectancy, and educational inequalities may all be interwoven within this meritocratic framework that rewards individuals for reproducing their status quo (Gross 246). Latin American

women in transnational marriages may find that their achievements lie within holding positions of lower income, status, and opportunity while finding it difficult to fully take control of their narratives and achieve as much as their male counterparts.

Moreover, the racial and ethnic identity of Latin American women in Norway intersects with their gender to potentially compound their vulnerability to discrimination. These women's socioeconomic status, whether brought with them or developed within the host country, intersects with other identities to further influence their experiences. Individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may encounter more significant challenges in attaining education, job prospects, and upward mobility (Potter et al. 278). On the other hand, having a higher social and economic standing may offer some protection against certain forms of discrimination but does not eliminate the impact of race, ethnicity, or gender (278). Thus, intersectional theory in this research allows for a recognition of the interconnectedness of various social identities and “how they compound and intersect to produce unique forms of discrimination and privilege” (Williams-Butler 516). By exploring the intersection of these identities, we can gain a deeper understanding of the diverse range of experiences Latin American women in transnational marriages have in Norway.

2.5 Marriage and Family Migration in Norway and ‘Real’ Relationships

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has implemented stringent measures to ensure that marriages are not merely for convenience but are based on genuine relationships (UDI). The immigration system in Norway does not operate in isolation; socio-cultural norms and legal standards influence it. As Pellander notes, “Immigration systems draw on a mix of socio-cultural norms and legal standards to define acceptable family structures” (Pellander 2). This connection between culture and law is vital in shaping the recognition of transnational families within the migration law framework.

Authorities like the UDI assess whether couples meet the Norwegian criteria, including financial stability and shared responsibilities (Pellander 2). Pellander elaborates on this by stating, “The recognition of transnational families in migration law has grown more complex, with authorities like the UDI demanding proof that couples conform to

Norwegian criteria” (2). This complexity is further underscored by Dr. Helga Eggebø, who points out that “Underpinning these assessments is the principle that only ‘real’ relationships qualify for marriage migration” (Eggebø 2013, 773).

The strict power held by Norwegian officials in these matters can lead to the rejection of applications and has broader political implications, potentially resulting in “general restrictions on marriage migration” (Eggebø 2013, 774). Couples must demonstrate the validity of their marriage through an approved officiant and, if married abroad, must adhere to local and Norwegian requirements (774). This ensures the marriage is recognized as legitimate and not merely a means to an end (UDI). The UDI’s scrutiny extends to cultural considerations, including the duration of the relationship, mutual knowledge between partners, age differences, and any prior residence applications (UDI). These factors pose significant challenges for couples attempting to navigate the immigration process.

Eggebø provides insight into the challenges presented by UDI by stating, “Furthermore, marriages that do not align with a couple’s native cultural norms are more likely to be viewed suspiciously” (Eggebø 2013, 775). This statement suggests that marriages that deviate from traditional cultural expectations from the country where the spouse comes from are subjected to greater scrutiny; consequently, it contradicts the assumption that the UDI would favor partnerships that resemble Norwegian-like unions. Pellander reflects on this irony, suggesting that “when Norwegian bureaucrats ponder about cultural differences, belonging takes on a new sense” because to belong to Norway as marriage migrants, “couples are first expected to prove their belonging to their own country” (Pellander 6). This intense scrutiny can cast doubt on sincere relationships, making the process more arduous for couples genuinely seeking to unite and live in Norway.

2.6 Social Integration, Cultural Dissonance and Mental Health

Odd Steffen Dalgard and Suraj Bahadur Thapa’s study’s findings present some differences between the results from women’s and men’s mental health distress to social integration: “Men from non-Western countries found their social integration to be positively correlated with mental health, whereas this same correlation was

conspicuously absent for women” (Dalgard 9). Analyzing this contrast further, it is apparent that the traditional societal roles occupied by women from non-Western countries make them “face greater challenges and tensions when attempting to integrate into Western cultures in comparison to their male counterparts” (9)—nevertheless, this subject’s research did not look at the experiences on Latin women. Melanie Lindsay Straiton’s research on Thai women highlights that depending on where the women are from, some “may have different experiences than other migrants” (Straiton 108). For instance, Latin women may have distinct experiences and challenges within transnational marriages, just as research has shown differences for Thai women (108).

Further research in Oslo “has shown an increased prevalence of psychological distress among immigrants” (Dalgard 2). According to the surveys, the primary reasons non-western immigrants in Norway appear to suffer from poor mental health are related to a “lack of paid employment, negative life events, lack of social support, and a feeling of powerlessness” (Dalgard 2). Factors such as job denial, past traumatic experiences, aging, loneliness, and housing denial also contribute to these issues (2). These factors underline the need for policies and intersectional research tailored to the specific needs of different immigrant groups—and even within their group— especially considering the varying impact on men and women (Dalgard 9).

Another factor that can either worsen or improve the mental health of an immigrant is the size of their respective immigrant community (Dalgard 3). The expected time for an immigrant to assimilate into their new culture is another important consideration, as “there is some evidence that pressure towards rapid assimilation increases the risk of mental disorder, and that a pluralistic community is best for the mental health of immigrants” (3). This evidence suggests that allowing immigrants more time and flexibility to adapt to their new environment, rather than imposing strict deadlines or expectations, could benefit their mental well-being in the long run.

Cognitive dissonance arises when an individual or group has conflict or tension with cultural practices, values, or beliefs they encounter that are separate from their own. Manish Kumar Ishan talks about this concept in the framework of immigration. He describes that cultural dissonance can cause immigrants to feel dislocated and alienated and have an identity crisis when they attempt reconciliation between their cultural practices from native countries and those from which they have migrated. They may feel they cannot assimilate into the host culture, maintain the connection with native cultures,

and establish a sense of belonging within either environment. The Namesake portrays one rendition of this dissonance as Indian immigrants often struggle deeply with the American ways of life and the millennia of cultural and social traditions that form their rich histories (Ishan 199, 201). Cognitive dissonance shapes many ways immigrants experience their respective environments because those environments may present hostilities to the immigrants. In-group out-group biases could result in negative sentiments towards migrants who are often faced with the challenge of adaptation and preserving some of their cultural heritage. This struggle between the old and new identities and, ultimately, creating a brand new identity represents the struggle of many migrants, a looking glass into the nature of their experiences within the host country.

The Stress of Immigration Survey (SOIS) screens to assess immigration-related stress factors that impact the migrant experience. It consists of 21 items that look for stress within categories such as language, work issues, nostalgia for family and home country, immigrant status, and cultural dissonance, to name a few relevant factors. The survey assesses three months, meaning that it captures a recent snapshot of the immigrant experience and quantifies it in a manner researchers can qualify to assess how much stress an immigrant goes through. Given its high reliability and validity, it makes it a potent tool for detecting high levels of immigration-related stress (R. et al. et al. 51)

Latina women face an exceptionally high number of stressors; according to Sternberg and colleagues, they have language barriers, family separation, employment uncertainties, poverty, discrimination, social prejudices, and xenophobia from national anti-immigrant sentiments. The author describes these stressors as a significant contributor to the chronically elevated stress levels among Latina immigrant women, often referred to as immigration-related stress. In the United States, immigrant Latina women are more likely than their white counterparts to experience and live within poverty and have less formal education and minimal healthcare, if any (R. et al. et al. 40). These compounding variables mean that Latina women experience an undue burden of stress when they are immigrating to different nations. Under contexts of socioeconomic disadvantage and racial-related discrimination, this may be even more detrimental to their mental health. They are forced to deal with cultural dissonance as a constant source of distress, which may predispose them to mental health conditions that are induced further by stress.

The field test that Sternberg and colleagues conducted showed exciting results when looking at stress scores from low-income Mexican women in the United States. They are especially vulnerable to intimate partner violence, often associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and major depression (R. et al. et al. 40). Women from low socioeconomic status may be at a greater risk of being unable to integrate successfully, be more subjected to prejudice from their lack of integration, and at a higher risk of mental health disorders from the results of the field test.

Some of the other scores of interest are that Yearning for family and home country rated the highest within the survey at 4.40 on average and was most strongly correlated with the perceived stress scale scores. This reveals that immigrant women may have strong ties to family and society at home, making them less impervious to the isolation of being surrounded by an environment where they do not feel supported. Closely following this score was lack of legal immigrant status, the ability to migrate successfully and establish themselves in a society where their lives may be uprooted, presents unique and constant source stress, where they may lose their livelihoods and lives that they have built depending on the immigration sentiment within their host country (R. et al. et al. 48) . As immigrant policies and political bodies can demonstrate great deals of volatility this may make it difficult for them to assimilate their lives within their host country. The Misuse of the Right to Family Reunification: marriages of Convenience and False Declarations of Parenthood from Norway highlights some stringent measures taken to prevent migrant women from allowing their families to assimilate with them, potentially depriving them of a sense of community and connecting both socially and culturally.

Ammara Jehangir and Dr. Rabia Farooqi find a similar positive correlation between Acculturation and psychological distress, as well as intergenerational cultural dissonance and psychological distress. (Jehangir et al. 28). Acculturation affects how immigrants integrate within society, and its presence marks apparent psychological distress. The more there is a lack of integration, the greater the distress risk from this study. These experiences are not local to migrants but persist intergenerationally, indicating a more profound impact on how immigrants experience stress and how that stress translates to the generations that follow from the first generation. Females are also more likely to experience psychological stress and intergenerational cultural dissonance, making screening especially important along gender, race, and socioeconomic axis to

capture the unique experiences within their intersections. The way educational systems lack preparation to enhance the learning experiences of immigrant students can play a significant role in the degree to which Acculturation plays a harmful role in their learning experience. Adolescents, in particular, are a vulnerable group that may require additional support to be able to assimilate in a manner that prevents additional psychological distress and cultural dissonance (Jehangir et al. 33).

2.7 The absence of Race in Norway

Jon Røyne Kyllingstad's research delves into the rationality of national identity and cultural debates in Norway, a nation that "does not have a history of race-based slavery or legal racial segregation" and the Norwegian state "has not been a colonial power" but it "does not mean that Norway does not have a history of 'race'"(Kyllingstad 319). For example, the concept of 'Norwegianness' is linked to a set of "historical, cultural, and linguistic features, not their racial identity that defined the Norwegians as a separate people," reflecting a national identity that seeks to set itself apart through these elements rather than through racial delineations (320).

Norway's journey to sovereignty, particularly its separation from Sweden in 1905, intensified the need to forge a distinct Norwegian identity (Kyllingstad 320). This nation-building process emphasized linguistic and cultural differentiation from Scandinavia's more dominant powers (320). Notably, this quest for a distinct identity did not center on racial purity but instead on creating a cohesive cultural narrative, one that often meant the forceful assimilation of minority groups (321). For example, Norwegian policies, historically, have not focused on protecting the 'racial purity' Norwegians but have pursued a rigorous agenda of cultural assimilation, at times coercively, to sculpt a culturally homogeneous nation (321). The expectation of assimilating poses significant challenges, as immigrants must often reconcile their individual and collective identities with the dominant culture's expectations.

2.8 Gender and Power in Transnational Marriages

Gender provides a complex variable in the context of transnational marriages as there are many dynamics associated with how gender can shift and potentially imbalance

the power within a transnational marriage. One perspective to consider is that Latin American women may marry Norwegian men to gain more power within their family potentially. This can be traced to Latin America potentially having a particular perception of Norwegian men that conflates prosperity, financial stability, social status, environmental access to wealth, and other cultural factors (Gernsheim 283). These factors must be noted in the discussion of these marriages as they motivate women within these marriages to leave their home countries to pursue them. Women are often also subjected to much more control, being near their parents-in-law as daughters-in-law are often expected to be under the guise of social control and daily obedience. When they can move to an area far away, this power often shifts in their favor as they only have to worry about power dynamics within the relationship and within the new country they reside in. It contextualizes how we view Latin American women because this power shift can be associated with more freedom and leverage for them to establish themselves within social contexts. Gender relations within transnational marriages are complex and can vary widely depending on the circumstances, so it is essential to understand that while the literature and analysis can point to various factors, individual couples have their local environments that must be considered.

An access point to much power within these dynamics may also come from whom migrants tend to interact. Latin American women who migrate to a new country with their Norwegian partner may be likely to interact not only with people from the host country or their ethnic background but also with individuals from different ethnic backgrounds (Gernsheim 274). This cultural exposure reveals that depending on cultural and social exchange between individuals from an array of backgrounds may shift how Latin American women have power within their new host country. Suppose a Latin American woman encounters women from cultures where women hold power, prestige, and wealth independently. In that case, the exchanges may prompt a shift in her power dynamics based on this exchange.

Conversely, the opposite may also hold. Cross-cultural exchange plays a significant role in the types of social relationships and social values Latin American women may have regarding their societal power. Individuals who promote social control and obedience may promote a more oppressive theoretical value framework than individuals who sit on a different area of that spectrum, embracing independence.

Latin American women must also be concerned with bureaucratic struggles that put them at the discretion of the governments within their host country. Passport strengths are not created equal, creating a fundamental imbalance in how bureaucratic systems treat transnational marriages. If a Latin American woman attempts to migrate with their Norwegian spouse, both may face significantly different challenges (Grenshein 272).

Latin American women across different races within their ethnic countries provide another critical variable in understanding transnational marriages. As Riosmena and Sue describe, in Mexico, Black and indigenous women face multiple forms of discrimination based on gender, class, ethnicity, and race. They are particularly vulnerable to various types of discrimination, oppression, and gendered violence (Riosmena 492). When discussing different qualitative and quantitative methodologies to interrogate the issues of these intra-race strata further, there must be a discussion of how these dynamics can change the outlook of transnational marriage in power dynamics with society and within the marriage due to the types of violence, discrimination, and oppression that may already be present and a significant part of the life experience of different Latin American women. Latin American women represent a diverse racial profile, making their experience diverge significantly from one group to another. Socioeconomics, societal background, intra-cultural values, and violence provide context on how the experiences of these women can be better contextualized in transnational marriages. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw 1991) describes how socially constructed categories in structural relations of power interact in mutually constitutive ways to produce intersecting forms of disadvantage. From this vantage point of the authors, we can see that the experiences of different Latin American ways may produce unique intersectional disadvantages of power that are relevant to the cases of the individual woman. An intersectional perspective on the balance of power drives the goal of the research question proposed here, trying to develop further an understanding of the challenges that Latin American women face within transnational marriages with Norwegian men.

2.9 Power Imbalances in Transnational Marriages

Gender inequalities describe a pertinent form of imbalance within transnational marriages. To understand the relationship between gender and power imbalance, the axis of inequality that intersects with gender must be defined. As Hadjar and Gross define it, "There are systematic variations in aspects related to education that are structured along gender as an axis of inequality" (Gross 160). This examines the relationship with gender and various factors that may create imbalances for women themselves prior to even entering the complex dynamics of transnational marriage.

In the education system, vertical and horizontal inequalities are defined by Hadjar and Gross. "Vertical inequalities are related to the unequal distribution of educational resources and opportunities, which can lead to differences in educational achievement and attainment between different social groups. Horizontal inequalities relate not to hierarchical ordering, but to heterogeneity, such as field of study." (Gross 160). Vertical inequalities may create power imbalances by perpetuating certain forms of glass ceilings, limiting resources and the ability for women to achieve the same outcome as their male counterparts. Women who compete for a single "gender" related position in a male-dominated field may be one such example. Hiring biases and employment opportunities are essential to educational opportunities, resources, and accessibility. Less accessible resources indicate that women may experience fewer opportunities, and the ability to access the available opportunities creates deficits in women within areas like the workforce. This ordering can also address intra-household stratifications. In particular, what women are "expected to do within their households" analysis of women should attempt to capture bias and dynamics within their micro-environment context to more accurately depict their experiences. Kim points out that traditional gender roles are an integral part of marriage for women; their roles as wives and mothers often precede their own needs, which introduces the role of expectations and obligations within marriage (Kim 727). These inequitable distributions of power are also defined concretely by Benkirane and Doucerain as unequal distributions of household labor, decision-making authority, and economic resources (Doucerain 131). These factors may limit a woman's ability to access, receive, and thrive within employment spaces. Screening for how these factors impact women's lives needs consideration when devising methodological screens and additionally for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Today, a meta-analysis from empirical studies within Germany and Switzerland shows that gender differences vary in education by stages. Vertical differences for women have changed substantially as more women attend school and earn degrees than most men worldwide. Historically, the difference in the first half of the 20th century was that men dominated secondary schooling and higher education. At the same time, women remained underrepresented; by the end of the century, women had come to overtake the educational attainment of their male counterparts (Gernshein 161). Conversely, Greenstein argues that horizontal inequalities have lessened over time but have plateaued and changed less than their vertical counterparts. This analysis indicates that the way the inequities are structured around patriarchy may have changed with time, not making the inequalities obsolete. This study attempts to capture the changing inequality dynamics to see where they are most concentrated within transnational marriages. Outdated metrics and indicators may not provide the theoretical framework to capture more modern forms of inequity and shifting power dynamics that were not represented in past literature.

Patriarchy and gender are inexplicably tied to how women navigate the world around them to conform to the values and normative behaviors of the status quo. According to Kim, Patrilocality contextualizes women's migration to the postmarital regions of their husbands (Kim 722). The way that women move resembles a movement of commerce, the way goods might move through a foreign route to end up exported from their home destination. This denotes an underlying subservience of women to live their lives on a "male breadwinner." A concept Kim describes that reinforces the patriarchal standard that women must follow to meet the conditions of society. International marriages are particularly vulnerable.

A more governmental perspective on how power dynamics shift based on nationality is talked about within the Miuse of Right to Family Reunification. Governments such as the Norwegian government might be concerned that marriages are used as a means for a non-national to become naturalized and obtain citizenship: an abuse of marriage. This, in turn, makes these governments hyper-vigilant and cautious, imposing restrictions and hardships for spouses to become married and naturalized. This document highlights that to obtain family permits, the marriage must have been genuine, with couples being contracted in Norway or abroad living together, and house calls and interviews may be imposed to verify all of this information. Additionally, sponsors must

be able to support the applicant with future and previous income, and there are other specific requirements for cohabitants and false declarations of parenthood. Governments are duly concerned that the rights they grant their citizens are not abused to allow families of other nationals to enter the system. This may come at a cost to women from national backgrounds, as having familial support can be an essential part of maintaining social relationships and reinforcing cultural ties, a facet of health itself.

Employment also presents an essential part of women's integration experience when trying to assimilate into a new society and gain economic resources and financial independence as a power source. For example, the Norwegian government has emphasized employment as the most important facilitator for integration. Immigrant experiences and perspectives on the importance of work can provide knowledge that is important to promote their efforts to gain employment and contribute to improving professional social work practice (Ims 11). The identification of employment as a means to integrate represents an essential framework for social power within transnational marriages for women. Often, when women move to a host country, they may face linguistic, social, and cultural barriers that prevent them from integrating so that they can self-advocate and be fully independent. The workforce provides an avenue for women to take those dynamics and have the opportunity for cultural and linguistic exchange that may enable them to have more agents within their new environment. Capturing employment-related experiences of women in the workforce may allow for a greater understanding of whether financial resources add value to women in their power dynamics both within marriage and outside of work. Power may be structured around the geospatial boundaries of the workplace environment. As Haugen and colleagues point out, fostering intergroup contacts within neighborhood initiatives or sports clubs at the community level can create positive intergroup contact and friendships, thereby enabling immigrants to develop a robust national identity (Haugen 321). The workplace may be an essential part of facilitating potential social connections that enable a healthier integration as women become more accustomed to the environment that surrounds them. Haugen and colleagues also point out within their analysis that immigration policies focused on integration and multiculturalism can create a warmer and more welcoming environment in which diversity is valued and receiving society members have an active role in the integration process. Additionally, to nuance the role of power dynamics within these social relationships, the research produced a deficit in

understanding factors that explain the negative relationship between immigrants' ethnic and national identity. Policies within the workforce and immigration integration play a role in whether the distribution of power among migrant women acts more uniformly or potentially bimodally, an essential consideration in the qualitative or quantitative measurements necessary to capture power inequity.

Intersectional perspectives on gender and race depict discrimination women may face trying to navigate the complexity of marriage outside of the nation they migrate from and, subsequently, their power inequity. One such tool, the Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS), assesses perceived discrimination in everyday life. Participants completed the EDS to rate how often they experienced any of eight different types of mistreatment in their daily experiences (e.g., "Are you treated with less courtesy than other people?"; "Are you called names or insulted?"), (Lawrence et al. 2). Event frequency was rated on a 4-point scale from 1 (never) to 4 (often). The study used the EDS to reveal interesting patterns, such as the amount of self-reported discrimination decreasing across age cohorts, as well as the selection of the race and SEES attributions for discrimination, yet the selection of the age attribution increasing across age cohorts (Potter et al. 268, 276). This analysis revealed several essential indicators for the ways race may intersect with gender regarding discrimination. Race attributions and socioeconomic status were both associated with increased discrimination, and discrimination may act as a way to strip women of agency and, in doing so, their power. Qualifiers like the Everyday Discrimination Scale allow researchers to capture the living experience of individuals in a quantitative methodology that reveals insights into health, integration experience, and overall healthy being. These hidden revelations of power within experience may help qualify the migration experiences of Latin American women in their transition experience.

Another perspective on racial demographics and their subsequent inequities in power looks at the relationships between ethnoracial-gender inequality. Sue and Riosmena describe the role of race/ethnicity in creating power inequity by creating an inequitable divide that exists based on race. In particular, the patterns of ethnoracial-gender inequality uncovered in the study suggest that indigenous and black women face historical and contemporary discrimination and marginalization in Mexican society. The study found that the disadvantage was particularly pronounced for black and indigenous women compared to black/indigenous men (and to non-black, non-indigenous women).

The lower status of indigenous women goes above and beyond “average” indigeneity and gender disadvantages. The study also suggests that ethnoracial and gender forms of oppression may intersect in similar ways among the smaller categories of black-indigenous and black-only women (Sue and Riosmena 501). Analysis done here reveals that within Latin America, the stratification between gender and race is intersectional. Not only does race play a significant role in women’s lives, but it significantly impacts the power framework they can hold, access, and experience within society. Notably, black, indigenous, and black-indigenous women are all particularly subjected to individual forms of oppression that impact their ability to be successful within a transnational marriage context. Coming from a unique societal background where the agency gets limited by socioeconomic, educational, discriminatory, and health-related factors affects motivators in migration potentially if there are different levels of hostility conceived within their native countries compared to the host countries that they are migrating to. Survey analysis targeting these groups of women and their responses related to the forms of oppressive behaviors they experience within their native countries should be measured to address the gap in the literature as to how different factors motivate different women on the ethno-racial spectrum.

Health is an important determinant of a woman’s ability to go out within society and have the agency to advocate for her choices. The ability for women to have this control over their lives and choices is one form of power they possess as individuals. One article by Straiton and colleagues explores the health and well-being of Thai migrant women living in Norway. It investigates the factors that influence the health and well-being of Thai migrant women in or have been in transnational relationships in Norway. The study demonstrates that Thai women in transnational relationships have numerous difficulties and struggles that apply to them going to their host environment, including acculturation, employment, discrimination, social isolation, financial problems, and language difficulties. During interviews, respondents talked about health problems and reduced sense of well-being since moving to Norway. The authors found that different factors influence informants’ health and well-being. Culture shock, social isolation, economic hardship, gender roles, and experiences with healthcare systems are all factors that the analysis found women struggle with can shift neutral power dynamics to imbalanced ones (Straiton et al. 109)

2.10 Migration of Skilled Latin American Women

The migration of skilled Latin American women to Scandinavia presents a complex interplay of personal ambition, cultural adaptation, and integration challenges within a new societal framework. This chapter explores the experiences of these women, particularly in the context of transnational marriages, and the subsequent impact on their professional and personal lives. As Saara Pellander articulates, “Marriage migration challenges national norms and boundaries in a way that the migration of individuals to foreign countries does not” [Pellander, 2]. This form of migration is deeply intertwined with societal and national constructs of family, which are foundational to the continuity of a nation’s identity and values. When Latin American women enter Scandinavia through marriage, they bring a rich cultural heritage that stretches and redefines these constructs across national borders. Gender plays a significant role in the motivations and experiences of marriage migration. Riano argues that female migration cannot be solely attributed to economic reasons and that love and gender representations are important factors in binational marriages. The text suggests that evolving gender roles in contemporary societies have created tensions between men and women, making it more difficult for people from the same country to form stable partnerships. As a result, facilitated global communication and changing gender relations are both contributing to the increase of binational marriages (Riano 10)

Female migrants must be defined in the context of skilled female migration of Latin American women. Migration of these women may take many temporary, permanent, or even circular forms. International migration refers to an individual’s movement across country borders, often intending to maintain residence in the destination. The literature suggests that female migrants may face unique challenges related to gender, including discrimination, exploitation, and violence. This migration can empower women in specific contexts, allowing them to access employment and education, improve gender equality and norms, and strengthen agency. However, migration can also exacerbate vulnerabilities, mainly when migrants are low-skilled or irregular. The literature also suggests that family networks and migration culture can play a role in the continuation of emigration, particularly for women from certain

countries. The literature points out that by creating policies and guidelines from a bureaucratic level trickling down to individuals, policies can empower women and promote successful migration (Fleury 1).

Additionally, there are many drivers for women to migrate, including economic opportunities, family reunification, and education. Women may also migrate to escape conflict, persecution, or environmental disasters. The literature suggests that the reasons for migration can vary depending on the individual and the context and that women may face unique challenges related to gender, such as discrimination and violence ((Fluery 6). Migration as a way to escape highlights that even within groups of skilled women, there may be a large chunk of women who feel as if they are not safe within specific contexts, perhaps political and social environments where a sense of safety cannot be established. Safety for any individual is an important motivator and driver to secure for opportunity and agency. Disasters and lack of security prompt women to make choices where they feel they would be able to establish themselves in a manner that allows them to have a more fulfilling life. Since the findings by Fluery support that education level and current employment are positively associated with migration, it makes sense that the subgroup of women who are educated would be more enabled by their background to be able to navigate the challenges of moving to a completely different place and going through the process of deciphering complex challenges. One such study indicated that out of 14,000 individuals in 43 Mexican villages, higher employment rates and education increased migration among women; similarly, within a study in Morocco, women who held employment but were unsatisfied were much more likely to consider emigrating (Fleury 6). This indicates a shift towards modernity, women viewing themselves in control of their lives and wanting to find direction for themselves that they would not be able to have within the status quo, an essential indication of skilled Latin American women's ability to self-advocate and reach their goals. Coincidentally, expectations and gender norms strongly influence the decision to migrate. In some countries, single women are more likely to migrate.

Gender norms are a unique migration factor, as skilled Latin American women have multiple influences that can cause them to migrate. Social and gender norms can restrict women's mobility and agency, especially in more patriarchal societies. For example, in some societies, women may be expected to prioritize their roles as wives and mothers over their career aspirations, which can limit their opportunities for economic

advancement, uniquely as a provider and valued only for reproductive purposes rather than as individuals with their dreams and aspirations. These restrictive social norms are tenacious, can resist change, and may be further reinforced for migrant women. In some cases, migration may result in even stricter gender roles to preserve social norms when they “appear to be under attack.” For women who are often held more accountable for their actions to their friends and family at home, this attack can impose an indirect pressure to conform to these gender normative behaviors within their marriages to keep true to more conservative values within their native countries. However, it can be noted that migration still provides opportunities for women to challenge and renegotiate gender norms, mainly when they can access education and employment within the host country they migrate to. The complex navigation women face as to how to address patriarchy and gender-normative society best can be characterized by their environments and accessibility to negotiating forces. Women who form parasocial relationships within a multicultural and diverse context may have more opportunities to challenge normative behavior and establish their values in place of those imposed upon them (Fleury 22).

Another group that can be easily neglected in the literature is poorer rural households. Research suggests that poor women tend to migrate, but their migration tends to behave substantially differently from their wealthier counterparts. In the Philippines, poorer rural households were more likely than affluent households to send young women to migrate to cities for work. Similarly, Afsar finds that poorer women are more likely than men to move to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. In Bangladesh, 80 percent of female domestic workers came from landless homes, compared with only 54 percent of male and female garment workers, implying higher levels of poverty for migrant domestic workers. However, owning land, a home, or a business is associated with less female migration, though those factors probably increase the probability of male migration. In this sense, educated women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be more inclined than their wealthier counterparts to migrate, especially those who hold land, capital, and prestige, as they often have fewer ties from that movement. The literature supports the idea of additional economic opportunity as a significant driver of female migration, especially when poverty is severe (Fleury 6).

Although focused on Switzerland, Yvonne Riaño’s study, “Migration of Skilled Latin American Women to Switzerland and Their Struggle for Integration,” provides valuable insights that can be extrapolated to the Scandinavian context. Riaño found that

skilled Latin American women often experience a decline in their professional status post-migration. Despite their qualifications, they encounter barriers such as “restrictive visas, non-recognition of professional qualifications, language diglossia, cultural prejudice, and insufficient institutional support for childcare facilities” [Riaño, 22]. These challenges resonate with the experiences of Latin American women in Scandinavia, who face similar hurdles in professional integration. Skilled women are more likely to be subjected to conforming to more caregiving and domestic roles even within the workforce. Skilled women may feel more inclined to go into nursing or aide care, as indicated by Fleury, as in 2000, in U.S. cities, more than 25 percent of nurses and aides in long-term care were migrants. In the United Kingdom, a similar pattern emerges as more foreign doctors are women, and foreign women tend to hold nursing and teaching positions as the fastest-growing category. Riano also discusses that the professional integration of skilled Latin American women came out within the interviews conducted within the study, showing that these women aspire to work in the profession and at the level at which they were initially trained. However, in practice, their aspiration of professional integration is seldom fulfilled. An analysis of the current economic activities of the women studied reveals that around a third of them are not economically active at the productive level. Whereas these women were professionally active and economically independent in their countries of origin, they have become economically dependent on their partners and reduced to household keepers in Switzerland. The text argues that the social integration situation of these women shows that the majority are either employed at a level well below their qualifications or are excluded from the job market. This process has its roots in the prevailing discourses in Swiss society, which have led to the social practices and immigration policies that effectively hinder the social integration of female immigrants (Riano 11).

Gender segregation for women in labor migration is common for women who migrate for work to be employed in “feminine” positions, which is based on gender constructs of feminine skills and roles. Some employers reportedly prefer female migrants, considering them more “docile” and “cheaper” employees. The dehumanization of female migrants poses a severe implication for skilled women trying to migrate as their valuation in their new society may cause them to experience oppression and limitation if they are not displaying what society perceives as positive signs of assimilation. These signs are something the literature does not explicitly mention

in the context of the migration of skilled Latin American women. However, they may raise concerns when attempting to create a characterization of their experience in transnational marriage. Male migrants, on the other hand, tend to work in production or construction, while female migrants often work in the services sector or in domestic positions. This gendered division of labor can result in lower wages and limited opportunities for career development for women. If women's career opportunities and wages are limited, their ability to drive their lives and enjoy their chosen lifestyle is compromised. Quality of life metrics do not capture the nuance of gender dynamics when it comes to wage gaps and financial ability in a traceable manner to the more nuanced manners in which skilled women can face oppression during migration. Gender segregation within labor migration is a significant issue for women to support more successful transitions (Fleury 10).

In Norway, as in much of Scandinavia, the policies governing transnational marriages are stringent. Couples must navigate a complex array of requirements to prove the legitimacy of their relationships. As highlighted by Eggebø, "Marriages of convenience have become a central concern in political debates about immigration policy" [Eggebø, 773]. This concern extends to skilled Latin American women, whose marriages may be scrutinized under the assumption that they are primarily seeking economic advantage or immigration benefits. Governmental efforts in this area may be more legally restrictive to impede women's migration than men's. In some countries, mobility for women, particularly married women, is legally restricted. The World Bank's Women, Business, and Law data reveal that in 30 countries, married women cannot choose where to live, and 19 countries require women by law to obey their husbands. These legal restrictions can limit women's ability to migrate for work or education and can reinforce traditional gender roles and power dynamics within families. Skilled Latin American women may find that they must navigate more legal nuances to get out of existing marriages and pursue a path to migration (Fluery 25).

The integration of immigrants, mainly through marriage, is a multifaceted issue in Norway. Research suggests that "ethnic prejudices in Norway do not appear to be positively correlated with the presence of existing immigrants; instead, they relate more to the implications and consequences of ongoing immigration" [Moore, 360]. This indicates a complex relationship between the integration of skilled Latin American

women and the broader societal concerns regarding immigration's impact on national identity and social welfare.

Women who join cohesive social networks are more likely to counteract barriers to professional integration during their migration. Riano argues that in the informal setting of family members and friends ranging to more formal groups such as female immigrants, these groups can act as a way to counteract social and institutional barriers to professional integration. Skilled Latin American women are not a passive force that stands by in their quest for professional integration but those who actively seek out gender-specific strategies to counteract the bias and limitations that stop them from achieving integration. Social networks facilitate socioeconomic integration, work to reverse the prevailing negative image of immigrant women in Swiss society and resist the role assigned to foreign women as domestic workers. These social networks function for immigrant women to solidify their identity in a way they define, rather than as domestic workers or incompetent individuals. Immigrant women who ground their identities as people with the potential and capacity to contribute to the development of Swiss society privately and publically are the most successful at their integration.

Remittance is also essential for migrating women and their relationships with women in their native countries. They are an essential aspect of migration, with women being more likely to receive remittances regardless of the sex of the remitter. Women in Ecuador and South America constitute two-thirds of the recipients of remittances (Fleury 12). Migrant women also send home remittances; in general, women remit a higher proportion of their incomes than male migrants. However, total remittances may be lower because they receive lower wages. Women also show more stability and frequency in sending home remittances and are more likely to remit when expected shocks occur, serving as insurance. Migrant women's remittances also improve the family's well-being, with women again directing remittances for health care and education for their families.

Notably, some studies show that remittances may even increase education, especially for girls, enabling them to have a life of more accessible opportunity and increased accessibility to migration if they choose. Some studies do not that the effects of migration may not be positive. Some returning migrants must revert to traditional norms and gender roles, which may be at odds with their social, political, and economic preferences. Skilled Latin Americans are particularly subject to this as they may possess

the education and prowess to establish a firmer, more individualistic identity in a host country. This reversion can hold damaging consequences for the identity that they have affirmed themselves within. Migration may also strain families, with potentially detrimental effects on children depending on the nature of the situation (Fleury VI). Findings in the literature show that remittances have several positive and negative effects on women and migration. While they can provide crucial financial support for families and improve access to education and healthcare, they can also reinforce traditional gender roles. They may not address the root causes of poverty and inequality. Therefore, policies and programs that address the structural barriers to women's economic empowerment and promote gender equality are needed to ensure that the benefits of migration and remittances are shared more equitably.

Migration patterns that Riano studies of Latin American women who migrate to Switzerland tend to come from middle to high-income classes are educated, and have achieved a relatively high level of economic integration in the professional public sphere. Although this has often resulted from necessity (the husband's salary is not always enough to support the family)), women have also proved excellent professionals. After migration to Switzerland, many skilled Latin American women face an identity shift. Their principal activity becomes that of looking after their families. Sometimes, women become legally, economically, and culturally dependent on their husbands. As stated in the interviews, it is difficult for many to accept this identity shift. They see it as paradoxical that, having come from economically active lives in Latin America, they are constrained to a reproductive role in Switzerland (Riano 15). Often, this is associated with women finding that their professional identity is only relevant within the geospatial context of their native countries. This move to Switzerland within a transnational marriage shows a shift in perception from their spouses and the society they move into for them to shift the way they have power within their marriages. Within a new society, perception may factor into how they are received within the workforce, perhaps due to cultural stereotyping cultural, social, or linguistic barriers that prevent them from fully assimilating within the workforce in a manner that would let them live unconstrained lives. These trade-offs for educated women can be detrimental as they create a more reductionist perspective toward their lives and agency. As spouse and a mother, they are limited to existing as goods rather than an independent agent that dictates the direction of their respective life.

The migration of skilled Latin American women to Scandinavia, mainly through transnational marriages, presents unique challenges and opportunities. While these women bring valuable skills and diverse cultural perspectives, they often face significant obstacles in achieving professional integration and social acceptance. Scandinavian societies must reassess their immigration and integration policies to support the contributions of these skilled migrants better, thereby enriching their nations' social and cultural fabric.

3. Methodology

For my master's thesis research, my goal is to investigate the experiences and challenges faced by Latin women in international marriages with Norwegian men, particularly during the immigration process and the pursuit of a family reunification permit. To achieve this goal, I will employ a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research will offer a subtle understanding of the lived experiences of these women, allowing me to explore their perspectives, emotions, and challenges in depth.

I based my research on standard qualitative data, including interviews, previous research, and observations. In conducting interviews, I will select a diverse range of Latin women who are married to Norwegian men and have gone through the immigration process. These interviews will be structured to elicit detailed narratives about their experiences, emotions, and challenges. I will also rely on previous research conducted in this field to gain insights into common themes and patterns that emerge from the data.

I researched the firsthand experiences of five Latin women who agreed to share their narratives. I employed explorative and open-ended questioning to showcase the depth of their experiences and ensure an organic flow of information. I consciously chose this approach as it empowered these women to lead the direction of the conversation but also allowed them the freedom to express the nuances of their lived experiences without constraints. Additionally, I will make observations and document any interactions or encounters that occur during the immigration process. These observations and documentation will provide a contextual understanding of the challenges these women face, such as language barriers, discrimination, and the struggles of the immigration system. By combining these different data sources, I seek to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the experiences and challenges Latin women face in international marriages with Norwegian men.

The following methodology chapter is structured systematically to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding. I will start by outlining the research design, showing the conceptual framework and the motivation behind my approach. Following this, I will go into the specifics of the data collection process, clarifying the steps I took to gather rich and relevant insights. I will dedicate the third section to the presentation of

interweaved subjects, revealing the thematic crossings that emerged during my research. Subsequently, I will reflect upon some ethical considerations that this study provokes. Concluding this chapter, I will engage in a critical discussion, evaluating the methodological strengths of this study and its inherent weaknesses or limitations.

3.1 Research Design

This study embraces a qualitative research design to explore the experiences and challenges faced by Latin American women in transnational marriages with Norwegian men. It should be considered that “the choice of methods, however, is central to a study and will depend on theoretical ideas concerning the phenomena” I am discussing (Lanza 18); therefore, qualitative research allows an in-depth understanding of the participants’ perspectives and lived experiences, enabling a rich exploration of the research topic. This research strives to capture the subtle narratives of the participants’ experiences through interviews and observations.

The researcher also acknowledges the limitations of a qualitative approach, such as a smaller sample size and limited generalizability. For example, social and psychological principles and ideas are needed to construct the qualitative approach. It aims to understand the behavior and culture of humans and their groups “from the point of view of those being studied” (Gelo 268). It also acknowledges the potential bias and subjectivity that may arise from the researcher’s interpretation of the data. However, it is essential to acknowledge that qualitative research has limitations. One of the main limitations is the potential for researcher bias and subjectivity. Since data interpretation in qualitative research heavily relies on the researcher’s perspective, there is a risk of personal biases influencing the findings and conclusions. This risk can undermine the objectivity and credibility of the study. Another limitation of qualitative research is the smaller sample size. Due to the in-depth nature of qualitative research, collecting and analysing data from many participants is often time-consuming and resource-intensive. Despite these limitations, qualitative research offers a practical understanding of the experiences and perspectives of marginalized populations, such as Latin American women, in transnational marriages. Through qualitative research, people can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and experiences faced by these women.

3.2 Recruitment and Data Collection

In gathering participants for the interview segment of my research, I mainly used my network of Latin American women residing in Oslo. Initially, I envisioned a more encompassing approach to data collection; my initial intention was to interview Latino men and Latina women who were married to Norwegians. By interviewing both men and women, I would have allowed for a comparative analysis of the experiences of both genders and potentially unearthed contrasting lived experiences rooted in gender dynamics. However, practical considerations, specifically time limitations, necessitated a revision in the research approach. Consequently, the scope of interviews was confined exclusively to Latin women married to Norwegian men. To ensure a robust and comprehensive analysis for my master's thesis, I interviewed five Latin women: W1, W2, W3, W4, and W5. It is important to note that, to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of these participants, I changed their real names with pseudonyms.

3.3 The Participants

Before I started my research project, I was afraid of struggling to find participants due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the potential hesitation of Latin American women to share their experiences. However, my fears were unfounded as I received enthusiastic responses from Latin women who were willing to participate in the study; nonetheless, although many women reached out to me with the enthusiasm of sharing their experiences, the recruitment process was still challenging because many of them did not follow up with the scheduled interviews due to unforeseen circumstances or personal reasons. Of the six interviewed participants, one decided to withdraw from the study midway due to personal reasons. This withdrawal presented a minor setback in the research process but did not significantly impact the findings.

All the participants were currently living in Norway. Three of them are in the process of getting their family reunification permit, while the other two already completed it years ago. Two of the participants are from North America, one participant is from Central America, and the other two participants are from South America. All participants' names were changed using pseudonyms: W1, W2, W3, W4, W5 I did not

choose from any particular nationalities; the only requirements I was looking for were for the participants to have been born and raised in any Latin American country. My selection criteria for participants did not exhibit a bias toward any particular nationalities within the Latin American region. Instead, my primary requirements centered around the participants being born and raised in any Latin American nation. This requirement ensures a genuine representation of the experiences and challenges particular to those with such origins while also introducing an element of diversity in the women's narratives and perspectives.

Three interviews were in Spanish, while the remaining two were in English. I left this linguistic preference to the discretion of the participants. By allowing the participants the agency to select their preferred language of communication, my goal was to create a more comfortable and authentic conversational environment for them. Such a decision is grounded in ethical considerations. Drawing from the literature on the subject, it is evident that "immigrant populations are particularly vulnerable" by providing a choice in language intended to mitigate any potential power imbalances or discomforts and simultaneously recognize the sensitivity and vulnerability that can often accompany the immigrant experience (Lanza 73). This choice served as a mechanism to ensure the participants felt heard, understood, and respected in their narratives and lived experiences.

The ages of the participants ranged from their middle to late twenties up to their early fifties. The participants' social status is also important to consider, depending on their position in the social class before moving to Norway. As I will show in later chapters, the participant's standing in the social hierarchy of their native countries significantly impacted their perceptions and experiences upon immigrating to Norway, particularly when navigating the complexities of the marriage reunification permit. The diversity in age among the participants allowed for the capture of a broad range of perspectives and experiences. The middle-aged to late-twenties participants brought a fresh perspective, representing a new generation of immigrants growing up in an interconnected, globalized world. On the other hand, the participants in their early fifties provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by those who immigrated later in life, often leaving behind established careers and support systems.

The participants in this study have a diverse range of motivations, circumstances, and immigration statuses. For instance, two participants initially traveled to Norway on

student visas as international students. Their trajectories later shifted when they transitioned to family reunification status. In contrast, another participant opted for a distinct approach, navigating most of Norway's immigration procedures for family reunification while still in her native country. The remaining two participants moved to Norway concurrently at the start of their family reunification permit processes. Each participant's unique immigration journey adds depth and complexity to the study. By examining the various motivations, circumstances, and immigration statuses, we can better understand the challenges and opportunities immigrants face in Norway.

All of the participants are multilingual. Among the participants, two are fluent in their native tongue, English and Norwegian. Conversely, the other two primarily navigate between Spanish and Norwegian, while the final participant is proficient in Spanish English and is acquiring Norwegian. As the following chapters explain, proficiency in the Norwegian language emerges as an essential factor because it influences the participants' integration into Norwegian society and empowers them with an increased sense of autonomy in the country. Furthermore, the participants' multilingualism is valuable in their daily interactions and cultural adaptation. The ability to communicate in multiple languages provides them with a sense of connection to their home countries and the capacity to engage with diverse communities in Norway.

3.4 The Interviews

I use a qualitative approach to help answer the project's questions since it provides rich and detailed information about human experiences that are not readily observable or quantifiable (Alshenqeeti 41). When doing qualitative research, one must "decide whether to use focus groups or individual interviews to elicit experiences, beliefs, and opinions," I opted to do individual interviews (Guest 693). In conducting the interviews, I followed a semi-structured format to allow for flexibility and in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences. I chose semi-structured interviews because they allowed me to create a guide with several open-ended questions. Then, I could follow up with probes seeking further details and a description of what my participants said (Roulston 9). Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was audio-recorded with the participant's consent. I established rapport and created a comfortable environment to encourage open and honest responses.

As mentioned, during the interviews, I asked open-ended questions that allowed the participants to elaborate on their experiences, challenges, and successes related to their immigration journey and obtaining a family reunification permit. These questions touched on various aspects, such as their motivations for coming to Norway, their experiences with the immigration system, and their integration into Norwegian society, their experiences with employment, and the value they attributed to work. The interviews provided a platform for the participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their experiences.

The narrative approach for my research was beneficial because it allowed me to focus on the research subjects' voices and explore the personal stories that shape their experiences (Moen 61). By adopting a narrative approach, I strived to find the individual narratives and experiences of the participants, as well as the broader social and cultural contexts that influenced their choices. This approach was precious in capturing the subjective views, perceptions, feelings, and reactions of the participants to their immigration journey and the challenges they faced in the process of obtaining a family reunification permit; furthermore, the qualitative interviews provided an opportunity for the participants to share their stories and describe their lived experiences in their own words, allowing for a personal exploration of their thoughts and emotions.

After carefully considering all the possibilities, I decided to conduct two interviews at my private office at the University of Oslo, and the remaining three were conducted via Zoom. My first plan was for all the interviews to take place inside my office at the University of Oslo; however, we had to adapt and conduct some of the interviews remotely due to the bad weather conditions and the participants' scheduling conflicts. Zoom for remote interviews allowed for flexibility and convenience, ensuring that the interviews could still occur despite unforeseen circumstances. As Dr. Lisa M. Gray points out, "the most significant advantage of online video conferencing for qualitative research is accessibility to participants" (Gray 1297). Participants can also feel more comfortable speaking about personal topics in their chosen space (1297). The decision to conduct some of the interviews via Zoom was fruitful as it created a more relaxed and familiar environment for the participants. I noticed that they were more at ease sharing their experiences and thoughts from their homes. This finding allowed for deeper engagement and authenticity in the conversations.

However, I was also mindful of the disadvantages of interviewing my participants via Zoom. Some limitations include potential technical difficulties, such as internet connection issues or audio/video quality problems, which could disrupt the interview flow. Additionally, conducting interviews via Zoom may limit non-verbal communication cues that can provide valuable insights during in-person interviews. Zoom interviews “do not occupy the same physical space, resulting in missed opportunities for the researcher to observe the participant’s physical space and respond to body language and emotional cues” (Gray 1298). When conducting interviews through digital media, I considered data protection and confidentiality concerns. For example, the vulnerability of data saved to a company’s cloud storage may compromise participant confidentiality and privacy. As I will explain more in depth in the following chapter, to guarantee my participants' data protection, all the Zoom interviews were made and recorded by VMware Horizon Client through a TSD project. The TSD project is a Service for Sensitive Data collection compliant with Norwegian privacy regulations.

3.5 Transcription

The interviews were transcribed digitally using VMware Horizon Client. I decided to take a naturalistic approach when making the transcriptions. This approach helps simplify the talking data by correcting grammatical mistakes and removing non-essential elements (Widodo et al. 105). The transcription process involved capturing the essence of the participants' responses by focusing on the meaningful content and removing unnecessary elements (105). The transcription process aimed to capture the participants' responses accurately while maintaining data protection and confidentiality measures.

This transcription process allowed for accurate and efficient conversion of the interview recordings into written text. Additionally, the transcription software ensured that the data remained secure and protected throughout the process, in compliance with privacy regulations. However, I did capture the conversational aspects of the interview by including overlaps, interruptions, and backchanneling. This resulted in a detailed transcription that may require extra effort to read and interpret. While digital transcription offers convenience and security in converting interview recordings into written text, there are potential limitations. One of the drawbacks of relying on digital transcription is the possibility of errors or inaccuracies in the transcribed text. Despite

the aim for accuracy, the software may need help accurately capture the nuances of the conversation, leading to misinterpretations or misunderstandings.

When making the transcriptions, I used a verbatim transcription approach, where I converted the recorder audio word-for-word without omitting or altering any spoken words or phrases with all the participants' utterances, including pauses, hesitations, and repetitions (Halcomb et al. 38). However, to protect the women's identities, I omitted any indicating personal information such as names, addresses, and specific identifying details during the transcription process. With the verbatim transcription approach, I ensured that the transcription remained faithful to the participants' original words and preserved their speech patterns (38). "In research underpinned by theoretical frameworks such as... feminism ... closeness between researchers and the text is critical to the research design and philosophy ... methodology" (40). Therefore, "a verbatim interview record is beneficial in facilitating data analysis by bringing researchers closer to their data" (40). Using the verbatim transcription approach, I aimed for a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives, as it captured not only their words but also the nuances of their speech patterns.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

To ensure the ethical integrity of the research project, ethical considerations were an integral part of the transcription process. I recognized the significance of imparting comprehensive details to participants and empowering them to make informed choices about their involvement. However, at the same time, I also acknowledged the potential difficulties associated with this approach. There was a risk of participants feeling obligated to continue the research on partial information, especially if they were drawn into the study without a complete understanding of its objectives (Allmark et al. 51). To address this concern, I implemented a model of continuous or process consent, as recommended by Peter Allmark. I obtained informed consent from all participants before, during, and after recording their interviews. I provided them with clear explanations of the research objectives, the potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants. I emphasized the voluntary nature of their participation and assured them of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Respecting the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants was of utmost importance. I used a continuous process of consent approach, reaffirming the interviewed women's consent throughout the research process (Allmark et al. 49). Before the interviews began, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their understanding of the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. After their informed consent, a consent form was given to each one of the participants. Inside each consent form was specific language emphasizing the protection of privacy and confidentiality, which was a statement explaining how their data would be handled, stored, and used for analysis. The consent form also specified the purpose of the project, the parties responsible for the research project, the reasons why the participants were asked to participate in the project, what type of involvement their participation required, how their data would be stored, what will happen to their data at the end of the research project, and the participant's right to withdraw at any time without consequences. In addition, the transcriptions were stored in a secure and password-protected server to prevent unauthorized access. Access to the transcriptions was restricted to only me and later deleted after transcription. Thus, maintaining the precision and privacy of the transcribed information was crucial during the investigation.

All individuals were reassured that their identities would be protected and their responses confidential. To further protect their privacy, I obtained consent from all the participants to use pseudonyms rather than real names when transcribing (Allmark et al. 51). Additionally, instead of providing specific locations within Latin America, broader regional descriptors such as North, Central, or South America were used. This was done to safeguard the participants' anonymity further and prevent potential identification.

Furthermore, I considered the participants' emotional well-being and safety throughout the research process. Sensitivity to the potentially delicate and intense nature of the interviews was maintained, particularly concerning topics such as bereavement (Allmark et al. 52). The potential harm to the interviewees and interviewers was carefully considered, and steps were taken to minimize any potential harm (52). To address the potential harm, I ensured that participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview process.

3.7 Data Analysis

The transcribed data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and key findings related to the research questions (Sibana et al 309). The transcriptions were coded and organized into thematic categories, allowing for a systematic examination of the data. The thematic analysis approach is beneficial when analyzing qualitative data because it allows me to explore large amounts of textual information unobtrusively to determine trends and patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationships, and the structures and discourses of communication (Vaismoradi et al. 400). Furthermore, thematic analysis is a transparent and user-friendly method that provides researchers with clear analytical stages, making it an accessible approach for researchers at the beginning of their research careers (Vaismoradi et al. 403). Therefore, using thematic analysis provided a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the data collected.

After organizing the transcriptions into thematic categories, I began analyzing the data. The thematic analysis gave me a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and allowed me to uncover significant themes and patterns in their responses. By closely examining the coded material, I could identify recurring ideas, emotions, and experiences from the interviews. This analysis provided valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of the participants, shedding light on important themes that emerged throughout the research.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, I employed various strategies throughout the analysis process. Firstly, I engaged in constant comparison, where I compared new data with previously analysed data to ensure consistency and coherence in the identified thematic categories. I also engaged in reflexivity, constantly reflecting on my biases and assumptions that may have influenced the analysis. This allowed me to maintain objectivity and ensure that my preconceived notions were not skewing the data. The findings from the thematic analysis were then compared and contrasted with existing literature to establish connections and validate the results. The findings of this thematic analysis were then carefully synthesized and interpreted.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis approach proved valuable in analysing the qualitative interview data I collected. It allowed for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives and uncovered significant themes and

patterns in their responses. By organizing the transcriptions into thematic categories and closely examining the coded material, I could identify recurring ideas, emotions, and experiences. The use of constant comparison and reflexivity throughout the analysis process ensured the validity and reliability of the findings. Constant comparison helped maintain consistency and coherence in the identified thematic categories, while reflexivity allowed me to reflect on my biases and assumptions that may have influenced the analysis.

4. Applying Intersectionality

The Latin American women I interviewed came from different backgrounds from Latin America. There was diversity not only in the countries they were from but also in their lives within their lives. I decided to use an intersectional framework to help explain the multifaceted context of the women I interviewed. While they will be generally categorized as Latin American, the societal contexts in which they come from have their spectrums of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and socioeconomic status. This paper will use intersectionality as a critical tool to understand how these women arrived in Norway, how they navigated the immigration process, and illuminate what privileges they may have had in order to migrate to Norway successfully. The experiences of the interviewed women build on the insights from their diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. By using intersectional theory, I will analyse how class operates as a critical factor in the power dynamics of Latin-American women's transnational marriages with Norwegian men. The analysis in this chapter will illuminate each woman's challenges and privileges and offer a nuanced understanding of how socioeconomic status intersects with other identity categories to influence their experiences.

4.1 Socioeconomic Status and Class Dimensions

This section talks about the distinct financial situations of these women and how their differences play a crucial role in their life decisions and relationship dynamics. The diverse socioeconomic backgrounds of the five interviewed women offer a deeper insight into their experiences and challenges. For instance, W1's grew up in a wealthy family which allowed her the privilege of getting her education in Norway without the fear of financial insecurity. In contrast, W2's experience as she received no financial support from her family, as a consequence, W2 began working at a young age in her home country in order to finance her education because her family was not able to help her.

As previously mentioned, in interview one, W1 comes from a wealthy family and had the financial support to study in Norway from a young age (W1). That support

provided her with a head start in adapting to Norwegian society and pursuing her educational goals.

In the second interview, W2 shares, "I left the countryside to study in the capital when I was seventeen. I learned how to live away from my parents from a younger age" (W2). This early independence laid the base for her resilience, which became crucial to building her life in Norway. Adjusting to her new life was challenging, especially in terms of finances. She admits, "At the beginning, I was very resistant; I didn't want his help, but I was very proud. But Norway is very expensive, so I ended up saying yes to financial support" (W2). This situation led to a dynamic where her husband kept track of expenses, creating a sense of indebtedness and control over her finances (5). At the same time, there was a constant fear of becoming too dependent on her husband, as W2 says "That fear of becoming dependently connected to a person was very difficult" (3). Financial support was necessary and created a sense of unease, which underscored the delicate balance of shared finance management and her fear of dependency.

W3 comes from a background where, even in her own country, she had no emotional nor financial support. She stated, "Back in my home country I had nobody, I did not have a dad. I did not have a mom, I had nobody" (W3, p. 5). This lack of a support system back home made her reliant on her husband, making her do anything he ordered. For example, a week after arriving in Norway, W3 faced pressure to find employment despite her recent move to a different country. Her husband insisted, "You do not speak English, and you do not speak Norwegian, but you still need to get a job. So he made me work as a cleaner" (2). W3 was not given an option to choose something she enjoyed to do, by the time she came to Norway, her husband already had a job ready for her to do.

In the interview with W4, her socioeconomic background played a significant role in her migration and marriage experiences. Initially, W4 was very reluctant to move to Norway, as she knew the challenges of finding work for someone who does not speak Norwegian. She said, "I read that it was difficult for people who do not speak Norwegian to work in Norway, so at first we wanted to stay in my country" (W4, p. 2). Despite these concerns, Norway's higher quality of life influenced her move. W4 stated, "But because in general terms the living quality in Norway is better than in Latin America, we decided to live in Norway" (2). However, W4 clarified to her husband that if she could not find a job in Norway, she would return to her country, as she "hated the

idea of being a stay-at-home wife” (2). W4’s words highlight her clearly defined boundary that if she could not be a financial co-contributor, she would prefer to move back to her home country.

In interview 5, W5 initially faced significant financial challenges. She said, “It was hard because I had no money back then. It felt as if I was trapped” (W5 p.5). This feeling of being trapped was due to a drastic change in W5’s husband’s behavior, further exacerbating her financial struggles. She says, “He used to be so nice and caring, but after getting married, he changed completely to the point that he even criticized me if I had food in the fridge. He also started controlling all my money after I moved” (3). The only financial support W5 had at the time was her family back in her home country. She said, “My parents used to send me some money, and I was able to work a little bit, and that is how I survived” (5). Although the financial support from her family back home was a lifeline, it was not enough to provide her with a true sense of security or independence. As she adjusted to her immigration process, W5 was still situated in a vulnerable position where she lacked both financial stability and emotional support in Norway.

The narratives of these five women illustrate how socioeconomic background impacted their migration and, more broadly, shapes the experiences of migration and marriage of Latin American women in Norway. Each story uniquely builds a compelling argument about the profound influence of existing financial situations on their life choices and relationship dynamics. W1's privileged background afforded her a seamless transition and opportunities in Norway, highlighting the advantages of her financial security as an immigrant. In stark contrast, W2 and W3, who each had limited financial support, faced challenges in maintaining independence and autonomy as they adjusted to their new lives as immigrants, emphasizing the struggles those without economic backing faced. W4's story adds another dimension, drawing attention to the importance of financial independence in decision-making during migration. W5's experience is marked by her partner’s control of finances and her own financial vulnerability. Her experience demonstrates the challenges of creating a new life in a foreign country without a solid financial foundation.

4.2 How Privileges and Oppression intersect with Immigration Status

This subchapter explores how immigration status intertwines with other aspects of identity, such as ethnicity, gender, and professional roles. Here, I closely examine the unique circumstances of the five Latin American women I interviewed and concentrate on how their experiences, identities, and gender shaped their lives as immigrants in Norway. From dealing with societal perceptions to balancing family and work, their narratives offer a look into their experiences as immigrant women.

W1's experiences as an immigrant in Norway intersect with her other identity categories, particularly her ethnicity and gender. Initially, W1 faced discomfort in public spaces, especially when accompanied by her Norwegian husband. W1 fears that her relationship with her Norwegian husband is viewed differently due to her ethnic background. She recounted, "On my own, I am pretty good. I am only uncomfortable when I am out with my husband and some people stare" (7). W1's journey also involves positive development and empowerment. She and her husband are "very aware of gender hierarchies, how some decisions may affect the other more than what we think.... Also racial hierarchies, we are both well aware of that" (16). This awareness has led them to make conscious decisions about their life, such as striving for equality in their relationship. W1's experiences as an immigrant woman with an ethnicity from Latin America highlight the intersection of immigration status with ethnicity and gender.

As an ethnic minority, W2 also struggled as a black immigrant woman in Norway. During her interview, W2 stated, "First, when I married this wealthy Norwegian guy, the expectation was: what will you do? Are you going to work? Are you going to become a trophy wife? ... I heard that from his own family members" (W2, 8). W2's ethnicity intersects with her immigrant status, influencing her social interactions in Norway, even from her husband's family members. W2 also mentioned the resistance to changing her last name after marriage to maintain her independence and identity. She stated, "In that sense, I had to be extremely independent... I wanted to have my own last name first, to prove myself first" (W2, 9). This choice signifies her desire to assert her identity beyond being an immigrant wife (9). The decision to keep her maiden name reflects the intersection of her identity with her immigrant status and her other identities as a woman and as a wife.

As an immigrant who grew up in a collectivistic culture, W3 perceives Norwegians as individualistic. She said, "It is hard to work here. Norwegians are very individualistic" (W3, 2). This perception affects her willingness to engage more deeply with Norwegian society (W3, 2). W3 is a Latin American, an orphan, and a childless woman. When trying to socialize with other Latin Americans in Norway, W3 feels culturally isolated and perceives a difference in how she is treated compared to others. She stated, "Latin people here say that I am weird because I do not have a family" (W3, 3). In Latin America, having a family "is based on a set of values or value systems that emphasize that the most important goals in life are taking care of your family" and highly valued when socializing (Ruiz-Gutierrez et al. 31). The sense of isolation and lack of support is clearly shown when W3 says "I don't have any friends here" (2). W3's experiences in Norway show the interplay between her immigration status and other aspects of her identity, such as her cultural background. Her life as an immigrant in Norway is built off of her life in her home country. W3 feels socially isolated even in her own culture in Latin America. Her individual life experiences as a middle-aged, childless woman and also as an orphan, demonstrate the complex, intersectional dynamics of her life in her country of origin.

W4 expressed her initial reluctance to move to Norway due to concerns about language barriers and job opportunities. This reluctance came from her apprehension about adapting to a new culture and professional environment (W4, 2). W4's hesitation about integration into Norwegian culture shows the intersection of her immigrant status with her professional identity. W4 explained, "Yeah, people here also think and act differently than people in Latin America, so it is hard to get along...but it will be easier once I get used to it, but Norwegians are very closed, you know? It is a little bit difficult to enter their world" (4). W4's struggle with the Norwegian cultural differences illustrates the challenges she faces compounded by her status as an immigrant and a professional Latin American woman seeking to establish herself in a new country.

W5 talks about the intersections of her identity as a mother and immigrant when she says, "My immigration story starts with my first husband. If I am honest, I wanted to come back to my home country, but I had a child with my first husband here in Norway, and now I cannot" (W5, 2). This acknowledgment from W5 shows the complex relationship between her identity as a mother and her immigrant status. Her journey to Norway was initially a choice made within the context of her marriage, however, the

birth of her child in Norway altered her circumstances. W5's desire to return to her home country clashed with the responsibilities of motherhood, as well as the challenges of transnational marriage.

W5 also shows the intersections of her identity as a wife and immigrant when she says, "It was weird because before I moved to Norway, my husband at the time could not stop talking about how amazing Norway was" (W5, 2). She followed, "He painted me a perfect picture of Norway, trying his best to convince me to come, but once I came, he was very controlling, but at the same time, he did not support me on anything" (2). Her decision to move to Norway was heavily influenced by her husband's portrayal of the country, indicating a level of trust and dependence on her spouse's judgment. However, the reality of her experience in Norway, marked by control and lack of support from her husband, starkly contrasted with her expectations.

The experiences of these five women illustrate how their immigration status is not an isolated aspect of one's identity, rather deeply intertwined with other aspects such as ethnicity, gender, and personal and professional roles. Each woman's narrative establishes the links between immigration, privilege, and oppression to illustrate how these components intersect. W1's journey from discomfort to empowerment, W2's struggle with racial and marital identity, W3's cultural isolation, W4's professional challenges, and W5's dual role as a mother and wife in a foreign country all emphasize how their status as immigrants intersects with the other parts of their identities.

4.3 Individual Agency in Light of Oppression

The narratives of the women interviewed provide a graphic illustration of the challenges and oppressions they face, ranging from workplace discrimination to domestic control, and how these experiences impact their agency and autonomy. By examining the interviews, this subchapter analysis aims to shed light on the cumulative effects of these intersecting oppressions. Each interviewee conveyed their perceptions and experiences of discrimination and marginalization. Then they each described how they used their agency and autonomy to make decisions that counteracted the oppression they faced.

W1's experience at work, as she described, is a clear example of 'othering' in a seemingly benign context. Her colleague commented, "You have studies, you speak

fluent Norwegian, I do not understand why you are not Norwegian ... but then he says: you are different, you are not like ‘them’” (W1, 15), highlighting a form of subtle racism. This interaction expresses the complex nature of ‘othering’ others in everyday situations. In theory, W1’s qualifications and fluency in Norwegian should facilitate her integration into Norwegian society. Nevertheless, her perception of her as an outsider reveals that this distinction is not due to her lack of integration efforts, but rather to an entrenched perception of her as inherently different from “them.”

The concept of ‘othering,’ as discussed by Thomas-Olalde and Velho, emphasizes how such interactions are not merely personal biases but are part of a more extensive system that institutionalizes and perpetuates exclusionary practices based on race (Thomas-Olalde and Velho 34). In this system, ‘otherness’ is not just a label applied to different people. ‘Otherness’ becomes a tool to maintain power imbalances (34). The ‘other’ is seen as perpetually foreign, regardless of their societal contributions or efforts to assimilate.

In response to this treatment, W1 does not passively accept these narratives. Instead, she actively challenges the racist assumptions she encounters (W1, 13). When looking back on her experiences, W1 wonders if there are differences in treatments based on her ethnicity or country of origin (13). By doing so, W1 navigates the ideas of racism and ‘othering’ not just through personal resilience but also through a deeper understanding of the systemic nature of these issues.

W2’s interview provides a vivid account of the multiple forms of oppression she has faced in her native country and in Norway. In her interview, she begins by discussing the classism prevalent in her country of origin. She stated, “In my country, the expectation is that if you both come from a different social class... well, first, people from different social classes do not get along in my country; they do not marry in the first place” (Page 4). W2’s statement demonstrates her experiences of classism and social barriers in her home country as well as in Norway.

W2’s challenges did not end upon moving to Norway. She recounted instances of racism and classism from her husband’s family, especially during social gatherings. For example, she said, “When people get very drunk, and they start telling me, what are you doing here? You know that, with your background, it is impossible to find a job here” (W2, 8). According to W2, when her husband’s family talks about her background, they are referring to her ethnicity as a black woman coming from South America (8). Her

response exposes the racism and classism that she has faced, like people using her background to undermine her abilities and place in Norwegian society. Such remarks also highlight a pervasive belief system that undervalues her capabilities and potential based on racial and class stereotypes.

Additionally, W2 faces gendered expectations which became evident when she stated, “First, when I married this wealthy Norwegian guy, the expectation was: what will you do? Are you going to work? Are you going to become a trophy wife? ... I heard that from his own family members” (8). This comment reflects the subtle racism and ethnic biases W2 faces, and the gendered expectations imposed upon her. It also suggests a patronizing view of her as an accessory to her husband rather than as an independent individual with her own agency, goals, and identity. The comments she received not only undermine W2’s professional aspirations, but how it impacted her self-esteem and sense of belonging in Norwegian society. Later in the interview, W2 admitted, “I was not good enough for a Norwegian ... it is very hopeless, it makes you feel very hopeless” (8). Here, W2 expressed the pervasive belief system that coexists with a feeling of marginalization due to her identity.

As a consequence of the treatment she has experienced, W2 “had to be extremely independent” (W2, 9). For example, even when her husband helped her financially in order to receive the family reunification permit, she paid him back for everything after she got a full-time job. Her decision to repay her husband for his financial assistance is particularly telling. It is not merely a financial transaction, but a powerful statement of her autonomy and independence. W2 asserted her agency by taking this step, countering any perception of her as dependent in the situation.

In her interview, W3’s painted a vivid picture of the complex and entangled forms of oppression she faced, such as sexism, a lack of personal authority, and threats of deportation. In W3’s description of her marriage, she narrated instances of gender-based oppression. Despite working outside the home, she was burdened with all domestic responsibilities. She stated, “After getting married, [her husband] put no work into improving our relationship ... and when I came home after cleaning all day for my work, I also had to clean our home” (W3, 6). This quote reflects the traditional gender roles and expectations imposed on her, where she was expected, despite working outside, to fulfill all domestic responsibilities.

In several accounts, it became clear that W3 was expressing how often her husband expected her to comply with his desires, as opposed to allowing her to act from her own agency and autonomy. W3 said, “I also had to ask permission for everything inside our home; I had to ask him if I could go to the bathroom, shower, or use the kitchen. Everything. Every time I was inside the house, the three years I lived with him, I really wanted to die” (W3, 6). Her husband’s authority overshadows her fundamental human rights through his level of control and W3’s lack of personal freedom, all indicative of an extreme lack of personal authority.

W3 experienced oppression on the basis of being an immigrant to Norway. During her marriage, her husband constantly threatened her with deportation. W3 recalled, “I was not able to choose anything, and I always had to ask her for permission for everything as well. If I tried to make any choice, [he] told me they would send me back to my country. I could not say anything” (W3, 8). As W3 described, this threat left her with little-to-no control over her daily life. She had to seek permission for even the most basic activities. Her fear of deportation, if she disobeys or makes independent decisions, created a power imbalance in her relationship, leaving her in a vulnerable and dependent position while her husband held the authority.

In response to her husband’s oppressive and discriminatory treatment, she reached a limit. She “went to a crisis center,” although W3 admitted that she did not get any help there (W3, 5). During her marriage, she tried to keep herself busy all day. “I used to work and study at the same time after I moved to Norway. I used to study four hours in the morning, and at night, I would go and clean work offices” (W3, 2). By engaging in work and education, W3 provided for herself and focused on personal development and growth rather than having to stay at home following her husband’s orders. In addition to the ways W3 attempted to salvage and utilize her own agency and autonomy, W3 sought independent support. It was through her own decisions to further her academic and professional training to restore any semblance of agency in light of her husband’s oppressive behavior towards her.

In her interview, W4 recounted how language barriers contributed to her feelings of marginalization and the oppression she has faced. W4 shared her struggles about integration into Norwegian society, primarily due to language differences. She states, “It is very frustrating, but I have to understand that this is not my country and that I have to learn Norwegian if I want to get along and have friends” (W4, 4). This frustration

underlines the pressure she feels to adapt to a new country and a new language. Despite these challenges, W4 acknowledges the necessity of learning the language. She admitted, “But learning Norwegian is difficult. It is a complicated language” (W4, 4). To cope with the language challenge, W4 dedicates her free time to attending Norwegian classes to facilitate her learning. Additionally, W4 appreciates the support provided by the Norwegian government. She noted the availability of six hundred free hours of Norwegian language courses, a resource she finds crucial to integrate into Norwegian society (W4, 4). W4’s narrative recognizes language barriers and that the language learning process is a critical key for her integration into Norwegian society.

In W5’s interview, she described the journey from her home country to Norway and that she was influenced by her husband’s portrayal of Norway as an ideal place (W5, 2). However, her experiences upon arrival were far from what she had imagined back home. W5 had several instances of gender-based oppression within her marriage, particularly after the birth of her first child. In her interview, W5 expressed a deep sense of being trapped, “I wanted to return to my home country, but I had a child with my first husband here in Norway, and now I cannot” (W5, 2). W5 endured both physical and psychological abuse in her marriage, and the abuse only intensified after the birth of her child (2). Her husband’s threats of deportation became a tool of control he used to take her agency away from her. W5 recalls the constant fear of being sent back to her home country, a move that would mean losing access to her child (W5, 2). To cope and manage with her husband’s abuse and threats of deportation, W5 sought support from her family back home. Her family sent her money to support her after she decided to leave her husband for good and go to a crisis center (W5, 3-6). During her first year of living in Norway under her family’s immigration permit, W5 was forced to constantly adapt and navigate to an abusive and manipulative environment. W5 exerted her autonomy and agency through seeking outside support, a crisis center and through her family abroad.

The narratives of W1, W2, W3, W4, and W5 illustrate the intersectional nature of the oppression faced by Latin American women who migrate to Norway for family reunification. These stories exemplify how overlapping oppressions compound their challenges and impact their autonomy as immigrants in Norway. In their own unique ways, each woman asserted their agency and autonomy despite the oppression and systemic barriers they faced.

4.4 Intersectional Privileges and Empowerment

The concept of intersectional privileges and empowerment is crucial in understanding immigration experiences. This subchapter examines the stories of five Latin American women who moved to Norway, each with unique advantages that helped them settle in and empower them to be the drivers of their own lives. Some of the privileges the women had include language skills, education, and financial support, which helped them connect with different parts of their identities. This analytical subchapter will explore how these benefits, from areas like marriage or legal status, empowered these women.

Each woman interviewed for this study brought different advantages when moving to Norway. For instance, W1's experiences highlight two significant privileges: immigrating to Norway at a young age and her fluency in Norwegian. Her early relocation to Norway with her family provided W1 with a foundational support system (W1, 1). This move at a young age opened doors for her to establish a broad social network amongst fellow immigrants and native Norwegians alike. W1 described this network as crucial to her emotional support in Norway (15). Her language skills were a testament to her integration into Norwegian society. Her fluency in Norwegian is a privilege that enhanced her overall experience as an immigrant in Norway. It bridged her understanding and engagement with Norwegian culture, customs, and daily life. During her interview, W1 openly acknowledged the privilege her language skills provided. She states, "I am very privileged for that" (W1, 12), highlighting her advantage. Her interaction with government officials further illustrates this point. W1 recounts, "When I call [to the police], they think that I am not the seeker; they think I am Norwegian, and I am like, no, no, I am the seeker, my husband is Norwegian, and you can tell that they are surprised that my Norwegian is so clear" (12). This interaction with a government official is a representative example of how Norwegians more broadly receive and treat her in other environments. W1 stated, "I also get better treatment when I speak Norwegian; I can tell they treat me very differently" (12). Her statement reveals how her ability to speak Norwegian intersects with her identity as an immigrant, giving her a useful advantage in her interactions within Norwegian society and the immigration system.

W2's educational pursuits and subsequent employment in Norway are her most significant privileges. Her level of education and career trajectory significantly contributed to her financial independence and empowerment. W2 explained that she applied for her master's degree in Norway before she got married (W2, 2). This decision demonstrates her will to establish a strong foundation for her future in Norway, independent of her marital status. The successful completion of her master's degree and the immediate transition to employment stress her academic and professional capabilities. W2 stated, "Then, due to my efforts, I got a job right after the masters. So I was not afraid because if things went south in my marriage, I could change to a job visa in Norway instead of returning to my home country" (W2, 3). W2's words emphasize the importance of her educational pursuits and the privilege they bring in providing her with a sense of security and strengthening her autonomy. Her professional achievements intersect with her identities as a wife and as an immigrant, ensuring her financial independence and offering her a safety net in case of marital issues. It also allows her to remain in Norway under a job visa rather than being deported if the marriage were to end in a separation.

Financial independence is a significant advantage and privilege for partners in transnational marriages. During her interview, W3 talked about her life in Norway and how she exercised independent control of her finances. She said, "The only good thing is that my ex-husband never asked me for money; the four years I married him, all the money I earned was for myself" (W3, 6). Her independent income helped W3 in important ways, particularly as an immigrant. Financial freedom gave her a sense of security and freedom, and particularly helped her after her divorce. W3 admitted, "After getting a divorce, I worked very hard and saved all my money, and I could afford my own house" (7). As an immigrant outside of her country of origin, financial independence gave W3 a stable sense of security as an immigrant in Norway, particularly when her husband did not want to help with the immigration procedures. She could afford the costs of immigration fees and provide her own housing, empowering her to act on her agency and helping herself stabilize her life in another country.

W4 stood out among the women I interviewed due to her unique privileges, particularly in how she managed her immigration process. W4 chose to start her immigration procedures while still in her country of origin and could maintain her full-time job. She explained, "It took some months for everything to be ready, but because I

did it in my home county, I could work instead of doing almost nothing here in Norway" (W4, 3). W4 completed the necessary paperwork for a nomad permit job. This permit enabled her to continue her professional work for a year after relocating to Norway. Unlike the other women interviewed, W4's transition to Norway was unique because she did not have to sacrifice her full-time professional role. This career choice offered her financial stability and a sense of professional continuity.

In her journey as an immigrant in Norway, W5 experienced privilege through the financial support provided by her parents. She recounted, "When I lived there, my parents used to send me some money, and I was able to work a little bit, and that is how I survived" (W5, 5). Her family's financial support served as a lifeline in challenging times. It gave her a safety net, allowing her to focus on essential needs and finding legal support for her divorce. The assistance from her family provided W5 with a foundation upon which she could build her new life as an immigrant in Norway.

The five Latin American women each had at least one unique privilege that helped shape their experiences as immigrants in Norway. Whether the privileges they benefited from were linguistic, educational, or financial, the five women shared how these advantages empowered them to act from a place of autonomy to make difficult decisions when confronted with a challenge. It explains how each woman's unique advantages, such as being able to speak the language or having financial freedom, make their lives easier and connect with who they are as spouses, immigrants, and individuals.

4.5 Conclusion

W1's experiences highlight the subtle racism that persists even with her fluency in Norwegian and educational background. W2's journey shows the harsh realities of classism and racism, both in her home country and Norway. W3's story is a stark reminder of gender-based discrimination and the struggle for personal autonomy in transnational marriages. Despite her efforts, W4's difficulties with the Norwegian language underline the challenges of cultural integration. W5's narrative, marked by financial and emotional struggles, sheds light on the difficulties of adapting to life in a new country. Chapter four focused on illuminating each woman's unique experiences, demonstrating how their immigrant status intersects with other facets of their identity through an intersectional lens.

This subchapter explored the experiences of five Latin American women who moved to Norway for family reunification. The women discussed their challenges and privileges that are shaped by their unique intersections of gender, race, culture, and socioeconomic status. I demonstrated that because each woman had at least one unique privilege, they were able to empower themselves to keep their autonomy intact. These five Latin American women shared how privileges and oppressions intersected in their lives and how they utilized their unique advantages.

5. Legal and Bureaucratic Immigration Challenges

Chapter 5 explores Latin American women's experiences with legal and cultural challenges in Norway through their marriage to Norwegian men. This exploration forms a crucial segment that scrutinizes these women's unique challenges, such as cultural adaptation and immigration complexities. This chapter looks through the specific challenges these women confront. It examines the influence of cultural differences, societal expectations, and legal frameworks on their experiences in Norway. This analysis is critical to the thesis as it addresses the central question: what personal and systemic challenges do these women navigate? Analyzing their real-life stories offers insights into their struggles and resilience.

5.1 The Intersecting Legalities of Gender and Migration

This subchapter will discuss how gender shapes the immigration experience. It will examine this intersection through the lens of personal narratives from the interviewed women, each facing their unique challenges in their immigrant journey in Norway. From the dependency and loss of autonomy expressed by W1, to the anxieties and vulnerabilities voiced by W2, and the emotional labor and isolation experienced by W3, W4, and W5, each narrative represents the complex interplay of gender and legal status in migration.

W1 talked about her immigration experience during her interview and highlighted the impact of her gender on the immigration process and her sense of empowerment. W1's statement, "This type of dependency makes me feel less empowered about my own life. Because I cannot apply to the job I want to apply because I cannot work a full-time job... now I have less control of my life" (W1, 9), emphasizes how the dependency created by immigration policies placed W1 in a vulnerable position, where her professional aspirations and independence are compromised. This dependency is not just a legal or economic constraint but also a psychological one, affecting her self-perception and agency, making her feel as if she has lost control of her life.

Furthermore, the intersection of gender and immigration status becomes critical in shaping W1's experience in Norway. It reflects a broader pattern where female immigrants, particularly those who move for family reunification, like W1, often find their mobility and choices constrained. She stated, "The thing about being an immigrant is having to ask permission to be wherever you want to be very stressful... for me, it was easier when I had control" (W1, 9). This loss is not merely about physical movement but extends to life decisions, career opportunities, and social interactions where for most of them W1 feels as if she needs to ask for permission. The immigration system has placed her in a lower position than that of a citizen, forcing her to stifle her aspirations and independence and rely on her husband for support.

The immigration experience for women like W2 is often shaped by a unique set of challenges and uncertainties. W2 said, "my concern is well, I am sending this to UDI and what if on a beautiful day, they decide not to extend my visa? I do not know. So my concern is that they would find something odd because of who I am, and they will deny it" (W2, 7). W2's narrative reveals the anxiety and vulnerability that accompany the process of applying for citizenship and renewing a family reunification visa. Her concerns are about the bureaucratic process and how her identity as a black Latina woman might influence the immigration outcome. This fear of being judged or denied based on personal characteristics is a significant stressor, indicating how gender and immigrant status can intersect to create a sense of insecurity. Her experience demonstrates how the immigration system, that has power over the trajectory of her life, could decide her fate in Norway.

Moreover, W2's experience emphasizes the dependency that often characterizes the immigration journey for many women. The need to renew her family reunification visa while waiting for citizenship approval places her in a precarious position. She must rely on the will and the actions of the immigration authorities, which cedes a lot of power over her life to bureaucratic officials. This dependency is not just legal but also emotional, as it ties her sense of security and belonging to the approval of an external entity. Such experiences are every day among female immigrants such as W2, who often deal with complex legal systems while grappling with societal expectations and personal anxieties. The livelihood of these visa applicants is in the hands of the immigration officers. Immigration officials, who are a manifestation of state authority, enforce societal pressures and stereotypes and deeply impact immigrants and often women.

W3's immigration journey, as shared in her interview, paints a vivid picture of how gender influences the experiences of immigrant women. She attested, "It took me three years ... It was hard back then; I had to prove that I took 600 hours of Norwegian, and sometimes for the immigration appointments, my husband did not want to come with me, so I had to go alone" (W3, 5). Her statement demonstrates how women, like W3, bear the brunt of immigration-related tasks. This situation is not just about the physical act of attending appointments or learning a new language. It is about the emotional labor and the sense of being alone in a process that ideally should be a shared responsibility. Her husband's sense of security in Norway left her to face the process alone. In addition to her lack of familiarity with the immigration process, she is forced to navigate the process alone.

Moreover, W3 had an ongoing need to prove her marital status and language proficiency to immigration officials. She described, "Every year I had to start the process online, bring the documentation, show that I still lived together with my husband, I was also asked how many hours of Norwegian I had taken, and our address" (W3, 4). The dependency status that immigration contexts often impose on women involves more than just paperwork. Immigration status requires them to constantly prove their worth and right to exist in a new country. Their gender and marital status intertwine with this pressure, and her words clearly articulate the emotional impact of this process, "I used to cry almost every day back then because I was so stressed with all the immigration processes. I was afraid I would be sent back to my country" (5). W3's statement sheds light on the fear and stress of navigating the immigration system, a burden that often falls heavily on women. The immigration process evaluates her right to live in Norway through her immigration process, which is evaluated on the basis of her marriage and her ability to assimilate. W3 is demonstrating how the immigration system necessarily calculates her worth as an immigrant through the relationship to her husband, a Norwegian citizen, and not on her merits alone. It is not simply about the fear of deportation but also about the feeling of being constantly evaluated and judged, which can be incredibly overwhelming.

W4's immigration experience, as detailed in Interview 4, offers a unique perspective on how gender influences the journey of immigrant women. One significant aspect of her experience is the financial and bureaucratic burden she faces. She mentioned, "Every year we pay \$15,000 NOK to the government, we deposit it in the bank, and besides

now they want to charge us tuition, so I feel like all this is kind of anti-immigrant" (W4). W4's experience emphasizes the financial strain and the perception of an unwelcoming system; a challenge that is often more pronounced for women who migrate for family reunification as explained above. W4 has faced a two-folded burden: to support a home and to support her own existence in Norway. The financial aspect, connected with the bureaucratic processes, demonstrates the gendered nature of immigration, where women often navigate these challenges in the context of their relationships and family responsibilities.

Another critical aspect of W4's experience is Norway's cultural and social adaptation. She expressed difficulty forming social connections due to language barriers and cultural differences. She stated, "People here also think and act differently than people in Latin America, so it is hard to get along. It is very different" (W4). This struggle indicates immigrant women's broader challenges in integrating into new societies. The language barrier is not just a communication issue; it represents a significant obstacle in establishing a sense of belonging and community, which is crucial for personal well-being.

W5's experience is the struggle with the immigration system and the impact of her marital status on her legal status. She faced significant hurdles in obtaining her permit, initially denied due to her unstable job situation. She explained, "the first time, my permit was denied because I did not have a stable job. Back then, the services also did not have English translation. Everything was in Norwegian, so my ex-husband did all the paperwork" (W5, 2). This situation shows how language barriers and reliance on a spouse can complicate the immigration process for women such as W5. The denial of her permit and the subsequent dependency on her husband for navigating the immigration system exemplify the gender-specific challenges women face in these scenarios. Further complicating her situation was the lack of support from her home country's consulate, which left her feeling isolated and unsupported. She recounts, "Once back in Norway, I went to the consulate of my country asking for help, but they did not want to help me in anything. I had nothing here" (W5, 3). Her quote shows the additional layer of vulnerability that immigrant women can face when they lack support systems both in their home and host countries and are denied.

This subchapter detailed how gender significantly influences the immigration experience. Through the personal stories of W1 through W5, it becomes clear how these women

face unique and often challenging legal hurdles in the immigration process; W1's feelings of dependency and disempowerment, W2's concerns about her identity impacting her immigration status, W3's emotional struggles with proving her marital status, W4's financial and cultural adaptation challenges, W5's difficulties with language barriers and dependency on her spouse. Each story adds a layer to the understanding of the complex interplay between gender and migration, highlighting the legal and bureaucratic hurdles and the emotional and social challenges that come with them.

5.2 Navigating Bureaucracies, Class, Status, and Paperwork

In this subchapter, I explore how socioeconomic status and class intertwine with the challenges of navigating immigration bureaucracy for the women interviewed. To do this, I have chosen one-to-two quotes from each interview that offer the best insights.

W1, Economic Responsibility and Visa Process:

- *"So then it was all on my own, this time, it is him the one who needs to have all the economic responsibility because is him who it depends on. One of the biggest differences is me allowing somebody else also having that responsibility for me, when before I was doing that for my own for a long time. For me, as an independent person, makes me feel very uncomfortable."*

This quote reflects the shift in financial responsibility that W1 experiences due to the marriage visa process. Previously, as a student, she was solely responsible for proving her financial stability. However, the marriage visa process transfers this responsibility to her husband. This shift underscores the role of socioeconomic status in immigration processes. For W1, who values her independence, relying on her husband's financial status is uncomfortable, showing how class dynamics can affect personal autonomy within bureaucratic systems.

W1, Visa Application Costs:

- *"Also, this visa costs ten thousand NOK to just apply for the first time and we both understood that it was also his problem, so he insisted to pay but I insisted that he did not pay because it is about me. But he said that we are married, so he ended up paying half and I paid the other half because I did not want him to pay that amount of money by himself."*

This quote brings to light the significant financial burden associated with the immigration process. Despite her husband's willingness to pay, W1's insistence on sharing the cost speaks to her desire to maintain financial independence and equality in the relationship. This scenario illustrates how financial aspects of immigration can exacerbate challenges for those who do not have easy access to substantial financial resources.

W2, Financial Struggles and Visa Process:

- *"I had to get a loan to move to Norway because it is not cheap. I did not have a job here... at least initially, but it was my choice. I decided to do that."*

This quote demonstrates the financial burden W2 had to bear to facilitate her move to Norway. The necessity of taking a loan accentuates the economic challenges individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face in navigating immigration processes. The cost of moving and settling in a new country and the need for immediate employment significantly strained W2. This financial struggle is a clear example of how class can increase the difficulties faced during the immigration process, where the ability to finance such a move becomes crucial.

W2, Economic Disparities in Marriage:

- *"He would financially take most of the costs... Anything extra he bought for me, like going to a party or getting nice shoes, he would put it on a spreadsheet, and eventually, when I got a job, he came back with the spreadsheet to me and asked me to pay him back."*

This quote reflects the complex dynamics of economic disparity within W2's marriage. The fact that her husband kept a record of expenses and expected repayment illustrates a transactional approach to financial support, which is not always expected in a marital relationship. This situation indicates how class differences can permeate personal relationships and add a layer of power dynamics to the immigration experience. For W2, who comes from a less privileged background, this approach to finances within the marriage added to the stress of adapting to a new country and navigating its bureaucratic systems.

W3, Professional Limitations and Financial Struggles:

- *"Back home, I used to be a nurse, but here, I am not authorized to be a nurse, so I have to work as a cleaner. ... I used to study four hours in the morning, and at night, I would go and clean work offices."*

This quote shows the professional and financial challenges W3 faces due to her socioeconomic status. In her home country, she was a nurse assistant, a role that offered her a professional identity. However, upon moving to Norway, she is forced to work as a cleaner, demonstrating the stark contrast in her professional status before and after immigration. This shift affects her financial stability, self-esteem, and social standings.

W3, Immigration Process and Financial Burden:

- *“It took me three years... I have to prove that I took 600 hours of Norwegian, and, for the immigration appointments, my husband did not want to come with me, so I had to go alone... I had to pay for a translator to come with me. Every time I asked my husband to come, he did not want to; he stayed home all day playing video games. It was also quite expensive; I had to pay more each time.”*

This quote reveals the financial and emotional toll of the immigration process on W3. The requirement to prove her language proficiency and the lack of support from her husband, forcing her to hire a translator, increased her financial burden. The escalating costs of these appointments illustrate how socioeconomic factors can exacerbate the challenges faced in the immigration process, as well as the intensifying power dynamics between two spouses. For W3, who does not have the financial backing or support system, these bureaucratic hurdles become even more daunting, reflecting the intersection of class and immigration challenges.

W4, Bureaucratic Challenges and Emotional Impact:

- *“Well, that was only the beginning; after moving to Norway, even though I could work, I still had to renew my permit every year. The website said it would only take some weeks, but that is false. The first time I renewed it, I waited for three whole months. I had to cancel my plans to visit my family back in my home country. You cannot go out of the country until you renew it.”*

This quote from W4 sheds light on the emotional and logistical challenges of the immigration process. The lengthy and unpredictable permit renewal process causes stress and restricts her mobility, affecting her personal life and plans. This situation illustrates how bureaucratic inefficiencies can disproportionately impact immigrants, particularly those needing more resources or support systems to navigate these challenges easily.

During her interview, W5 shared her experiences, providing insight into how socioeconomic status and class can impact the ease of navigating immigration bureaucracy. Two quotes from the interview mainly highlight these intersections:

W5, Employment Challenges and Immigration Denials:

- *“The first time my permit was denied because I did not have a stable job... my permit was still getting denied, so that is when I understood that they were going to keep denying my permit until I got a stable job.”*

This quote highlights the critical role of stable employment in the immigration process for W5. Her initial permit denials were directly linked to her lack of stable employment, reflecting how socioeconomic status can be a barrier to securing legal residency. The struggle to find stable work, compounded by the bureaucratic requirement for such employment to secure a permit, shows the challenges faced by immigrants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

W5, Financial Struggles and Immigration Costs:

- *“I am about to be a Norwegian national, but I just have to pay the 6500 NOK it costs. It is costly... but I I have no money. I feel trapped.”*

This quote explains the financial burden associated with the immigration process. The cost of becoming a Norwegian national is a significant hurdle for W5, who describes feeling trapped due to her financial situation. Her previous experiences of financial struggle, where she relied on money sent by her parents and her limited earnings, exacerbate this situation.

This subchapter showed how the stories of W1, W2, W3, W4, and W5 reveal their unique challenges due to their roles as women in transnational marriages, highlighting how gender, combined with socioeconomic status, shapes the immigration experiences of women. These experiences go beyond financial or class issues, combining themselves with societal expectations of women in family and marriage.

5.3 Cultural Barriers

Exploring cultural barriers and racialized experiences in immigration reveals unique challenges faced by Latin American women in Norway. This subchapter will explore how cultural misunderstandings and racial prejudices intertwine and impact women's immigration journeys. Personal accounts from the Latin-American woman

interviewed highlight the challenges of navigating a new cultural landscape, dealing with transnational marriages, and interacting with the Norwegian legal system. These stories reveal the influence of cultural and racial factors on the immigration process. The narratives range from adapting to different communication styles to confronting financial dependencies and legal uncertainties, emphasizing the crucial role of cultural and racial dynamics. Notably, this subchapter will not include W4's account as she does not mention any cultural or racial misunderstandings affecting her immigration experience compared to the other interviewees.

W1 describes her discomfort with Norwegian work culture, particularly its social expectations and drinking culture (W1). Her reluctance to participate in these social norms, influenced by her cultural background and personal preferences, potentially disadvantages her professionally. This cultural clash actively demonstrates the intersection of race and ethnicity with cultural barriers, impacting both personal and professional opportunities.

The intersection of race and ethnicity with cultural barriers also emerges in W1's immigration experiences. The marriage visa process, as she described, is financially and emotionally challenging as she expresses her discomfort with the dependency on her husband during this process (W1, 16). This situation underscores the complex dynamics of dependency and independence that immigrant women navigate, primarily when influenced by cultural norms around gender roles and marriage.

In W2's interview, she further compounded the complexities of her transition to life in Norway as an immigrant and a woman of color. She faced the challenge of shifting from a professional identity in South America to a student in Norway. This change was not just about career but also about navigating a new cultural landscape. W2 explained, "Here, I had to go back to school. I was not a professional anymore" (W2, 2). This quote shows the sacrifices and adjustments W2 had to make influenced by her immigrant status.

W2's experiences provide insight into the complexities of Latin American women navigating the Norwegian immigration system, mainly when cultural misunderstandings influence these challenges. W2 stated, "At the beginning, it was tough because people

from my country argue in very different ways than Norwegians; we are very loud, we scream, we are passionate; at the same time, my husband was very rational and sometimes passive-aggressive; he takes his arguments differently, which made me feel very frustrated” (W2, 10). W2’s frustration demonstrates the cultural clash in communication styles. This difference in expressing emotions and resolving conflicts can create significant misunderstandings within a transnational marriage. For W2, this cultural gap affected her relationship and likely influenced her interactions with Norwegian authorities. In a system where clear communication is vital, such misunderstandings could complicate legal processes, especially when seeking family reunification.

W2’s quote, “I was under the family reunion visa, which gave me some comfort, but I was always thinking: what if... Especially when you are newlywed, and all these changes happened, I thought: did I fuck up?”, speaks to the inherent insecurities and pressures of being on a family reunion visa (W2, 6). The constant 'what if' reflects W2's anxiety about the stability of her immigration status and its connection to her marital relationship. In this situation, the cultural misunderstandings in her marriage extend beyond personal issues, directly impacting her legal status. Her fear of making a mistake shows the precarious nature of her situation, where any error in her personal life or while navigating the bureaucratic system could lead to severe consequences. On one hand, there are cultural barriers within her marriage, which can lead to frustrations and misunderstandings. On the other hand, she constantly feels anxious about her immigration status, which depends on the success of her marriage.

W3 vividly illustrates the interplay of cultural norms and personal struggles as a Latin American woman adapting to her new married life in Norway. Her experiences highlight the challenges of dealing with legal and bureaucratic processes amid cultural misunderstandings. She reflected, “Back home, women are educated to do everything for their husbands. I was not like that. I hated that idea but did the same for my husband when I came to Norway.” This statement reveals W3’s struggle with deep-rooted cultural norms. Despite her resistance, she conforms to these norms in her new environment, stressing her immigration process. This struggle is not just with the

practical aspects of her immigration but also the emotional weight of the cultural expectations.

In her second quote, W3 described a life of extreme control within her marriage, admitting that she had to ask her husband permission for everything (W3). This level of dependency and lack of autonomy also affected her immigration experience, as she never expected her husband to help her and faced the constraints of her legal status and personal life dynamics, as reflected, “I had to do all the paperwork alone. My husband did not help me at all. I told you I had to pay extra for a translator because my husband prefers to be at home and play video games instead of helping me” (W3). Her words underscore her solitary struggle with immigration paperwork and the lack of support from her husband, who, as a Norwegian, is more familiar with the Norwegian system but left her to face the task alone, just as she does all the chores of their home alone all the time.

W5’s story vividly portrays how deep-rooted cultural beliefs may add to the already tricky immigration process. W4 stated, “I come from a country where men are the breadwinners and women trust their husband’s words ... so, I trusted my husband, but later on, I ended up regretting it ... Everything he did was to control me; he never did anything for my sake” (W5). W5 describes coming from a background where women typically depend on their husbands. This trust, however, evolved into a situation of control by her husband. It is a clear example of how cultural expectations can lead to challenging situations, especially in Norway, where independence is highly valued.

W5 also stated, “My residency permit was kept on getting denied because I did not have anything. Everything I had belonged to my husband; he even made me give him the little money I made,” further revealing the difficulties she faced (5). Struggling with immigration issues, she also found herself in a financially dependent position. Her husband controlled all her resources, including her earnings, complicating her ability to fulfill the immigration requirements due to her lack of financial independence.

This subchapter explored the complex dynamics of cultural barriers and racialized experiences in immigration, particularly for Latin American women in Norway. It illustrates how cultural misunderstandings and racial prejudices complicate their

immigration experiences. These women's challenges come to life through their narratives, ranging from adapting to new communication styles and dealing with financial dependencies to navigating Norway's legal system. These stories highlight the profound impact of cultural and racial dynamics on their immigration journeys. Notably, W4's experience stands out as she does not report cultural or racial misunderstandings affecting her immigration, showcasing the diversity within these experiences.

5.4 Resilience and Resistance, Agency within the Immigration System

Resilience and resistance, alongside agency within the immigration experience, emerge in the five women interviewed while navigating their lives in Norway. This subchapter analyzes the interviewed women's narratives and explores how each woman confronts and adapts to the challenges of their new immigrant, their immigration process, and their marital relationships. They tackle legal and married hurdles and strive to maintain their identities and independence. Their stories showcase their strength and adaptability as they navigate the intricacies of a new cultural landscape while also managing the dynamics of their transnational marriages. The women's accounts highlight the multifaceted nature of immigration, where adapting to a new country intertwines with managing personal values, independence, and identity amidst the dependencies created by immigration policies.

W1's early relocation to Norway as a kid significantly shaped her experiences. This early immersion in Norwegian culture and language gave her an advantage in cultural adaptation, a challenge many immigrants face. However, she still confronts the rigidities of the immigration system, especially when transitioning from a student visa to a

marriage visa. She highlighted this challenge, stating how before, she could deal with the visa responsibilities independently, but now her husband does it (W1, 17). This shift from independence to reliance on her spouse for legal and financial stability is a standard narrative in family reunification cases. Emotionally and psychologically, W1 grappled with losing her independence and dealing with the uncomfortable feeling of depending on someone (W1, 17). This discomfort exemplifies the internal struggle many immigrants face, balancing their values of self-reliance with the dependencies created by immigration policies.

To cope with these challenges, W1 adopts a proactive and resilient approach. She considers relocating outside Norway for better career opportunities and a more inclusive community, demonstrating the planning and adaptability essential for immigrants navigating new socio-economic landscapes (W1). Overall, W1's narrative reflects the difficult nature of immigration. It is not just about adapting to a new culture and language; it involves dealing with legal systems and personal issues of independence and identity.

Upon deciding to move to Norway, W2 prioritized her education and career, refusing to conform to the traditional role of a housewife (W2). Her background, marked by her mother's sacrifices for her education, influenced this decision. She explained, "I come from an unprivileged background ... my mom had to work extra hours ... so I could go to a language course because she wanted me to do well in life ... so I did not want to be a housewife, so I went to school," (W2, 4). This statement reflects W2's stance in using education as a tool to navigate and cope with the immigration process, ensuring her move was both personal and professional.

The emotional and psychological aspects of W2's transition are also significant. Moving from an independent professional in South America to a dependent student in Norway, she faced a shift in her identity. The financial reliance on her husband and the cultural differences in marriage dynamics added tension to her adaptation, as she shares how, at the beginning, she felt as if she was not in a good place, which made her even regret coming to Norway (W2, 13). W3's feelings of regret capture her struggle for financial independence and autonomy, crucial elements of her self-worth.

Upon her arrival in Norway, W3 faced a professional shift. Trained as a nurse in her home country, she encountered language and certification barriers that prevented her from practicing her profession. This led her to work in cleaning, a significant deviation

from her previous career. She described this change, “Back home, I used to be a nurse, but here I am not authorized to be a nurse, so I have to work as a cleaner” (W3, 1). This statement represents the systemic challenges that often force skilled immigrants to take up jobs that do not match their qualifications, impacting their identity and self-esteem.

W3 marriage, which facilitated her move to Norway, was not based on love but on necessity. She openly shared, “I was never in love with my husband. I did not like him” (W3, 3). She admits to trying her best to make her marriage work and make her husband happy because maybe if he were happy, “he would have treated [her] better and [she] would have fallen in love with him” (W3). This honesty reveals the painful decisions immigrants make for a chance at a better life, often sacrificing personal happiness. Despite these hurdles, W3 demonstrates remarkable strength as she learns to move through the immigration system, obtaining Norwegian nationality and eventually, after four years, divorcing her husband.

W4 is determined to maintain her professional identity and independence. She insists on finding employment in Norway, refusing to settle into the role of a housewife. Her determination reflects her commitment to personal agency and independence. She stated, “I told my husband that if I did not find a job, I would return to my county; I could not imagine being here without working or doing anything; I hated the idea of being a stay-at-home wife” (W4, 2). She demonstrated a proactive approach to establishing a fulfilling life in Norway.

W5 faced notable challenges in her initial interactions with the Norwegian immigration system. Her first permit application was denied due to unstable employment, highlighting the strict requirements and difficulties in securing legal status. She describes this experience, saying, “the first time, my permit was denied because I did not have a stable job; back then, the services also did not have an English translation; everything was in Norwegian, so my ex-husband used it as a justification to do all my paperwork” (W5, 2). This quote emphasizes the systemic barriers she encountered, including language difficulties and dependency on her husband to navigate the immigration process.

The emotional and psychological impact of W5’s immigration journey intertwines with her life. After moving to Norway, her relationship with her first husband became increasingly controlling and unsupportive, as she said, “he never had good intentions when helping me; he only wanted to get hold of my paperwork to hide it from me if I ever tried to leave him” (W5, 2). Her experience shows the emotional challenges and

isolation she faced, exacerbated by her immigration struggles. Despite these obstacles, W5 showed remarkable resilience as she successfully navigated the immigration system, with the help of a lawyer, securing legal residency through family reunification with her daughter after divorcing her husband

The theme of resilience and resistance, coupled with agency within the immigration system, resonates deeply in the concluding insights from the interviews of the five Latin American women. This subchapter discussed and analyzed the multifaceted ways these women navigated, resisted, and coped with the challenges of the immigration system and their marriages. These narratives confirm the hardships the immigrant experiences, highlighting the emotional, psychological, and practical aspects of adapting to a new culture and managing transnational marital relationships.

5.5 Conclusive Thoughts about Immigration Challenges

The exploration of Chapter 5 highlighted the interviewed women's socioeconomic, cultural, and legal challenges. The chapter's findings align with its goal to analyze the experiences of Latin American women in Norway, focusing on the legal and cultural challenges stemming from their marriages to Norwegian men. The personal stories of W1 through W5 painted a picture of their journey, emphasizing the intersection of gender, culture, and legal issues in a foreign land. W1 to W5 words have provided a rich understanding of these challenges, showcasing the cultural adaptation challenges, the emotional impacts of immigration, and the resilience these women display.

6. Chapter Six, Cultural and Social Challenges

Chapter Six focuses on the five women's unique challenges adapting to a new cultural and social environment. The stories of women identified as W1 through W5 illustrate the obstacles in transnational unions as they highlight various experiences ranging from cultural dissonance and social isolation to confronting stereotypes and prejudices. This chapter explores cultural adaptation nuances, the impact of social isolation, and the dynamics of confronting stereotypes and prejudices. With this exploration, this chapter addresses an essential aspect of the research question: understanding the lived experiences of these women. It offers insights into the broader phenomenon of transnational marriages and immigration.

This chapter's analysis contributes to understanding the challenges of cultural adaptation, the impact of social isolation, and the dynamics of confronting stereotypes in transnational marriages and immigration.

6.1 Cultural Dissonance and Identity

This subchapter examines the experiences of Latin American women who have migrated to Norway and married Norwegian men and how they navigate cultural dissonance in these unions. It uncovers the layers of their experiences, ranging from the discomfort in interracial relationships to the constraints on their professional lives due to immigrant status. Additionally, the text highlights the economic dependencies, racial and class prejudices, and challenges in social integration these women face. Each story, distinct in essence, collectively illustrates the profound impact of cultural dissonance on their identities and sense of self.

W1 expressed a sense of discomfort in public due to the attention their interracial couple status attracts. She stated, "It just becomes a problem when I realize that people look at us" (W1, 8). This discomfort emphasizes the external societal pressures and the scrutiny interracial couples often face, impacting how she behaves and interacts with her husband in public spaces. W1 also expresses a sense of professional limitation and frustration due to her immigrant status, which affects her ability to engage in her career aspirations fully. She said, "I would love to be part of a place where I can grow every day, where I am not constantly thinking if I am good enough" (W1, 5). This quote reflects her desire for a more inclusive and opportunity-rich environment, contrasting

with her current experience in Norway, where immigration constraints and societal attitudes stifle her potential.

Economic imbalances and dependencies stemming from her immigration status further complicate W1's sense of self. W1 discusses the limitations imposed on her career progression due to the marriage visa process, saying, "Our lives are on hold just because the system is so bureaucratic while people decide whether our relationship is real or not" (W1, 13). This situation impacts her professional life and her personal autonomy and independence, which are crucial aspects of her identity. Additionally, W1 experiences racial and class-based disparities within the immigration system. She notes the systematic racial divisions in the immigration process, indicating that her Latin American background affords her certain privileges compared to individuals from other regions.

W2 faces significant cultural dissonance in her marriage, mainly influenced by racial and class prejudices. She shares a distressing incident involving her husband's family, where they questioned her intentions, highlighting stereotypes associated with her Latin-American and black identities (W2). This experience challenges her sense of belonging and affects her emotionally; she even admits not feeling entirely accepted in Norway (W2). Regarding her professional life, W2 struggles to establish herself in Norway (W2). Despite her extensive experience, she said, "I had to find a job that took me fresh out of school and take away my seven years of work experience" (W2, 9). Her words reflect immigrants' difficulties in having their skills and experiences recognized in new countries, impacting her professional identity.

Furthermore, cultural differences in financial dynamics mark W2's marriage. She finds the financial arrangements in her marriage uncomfortable, coming from a culture where resource-sharing is expected. She discusses the expectation of repaying her husband for personal expenses, which felt alien to her (W2). This situation portrays the clash between her cultural expectations and the practices in her marriage, adding to the cultural dissonance she experiences.

Significant challenges and adjustments mark W3's experience with cultural dissonance; she faces a stark contrast between her expectations and the reality of her life in Norway. W3 describes her life as filled with rigorous work and strict household rules set by her husband (W3, 6). W3 also deals with isolation and a lack of a support system in Norway, as she expressed how she does not have friends in Norway (W3, 2). This

lack of social connections exacerbates her feelings of alienation and not belonging, making her experience in Norway particularly challenging.

W4's experience of cultural dissonance in Norway is multifaceted, involving both personal and systemic challenges. Initially, she faced apprehensions about moving to Norway, originating from concerns about language barriers and employment opportunities (W4, 2). Her first concerns made her reluctant to move, emphasizing the fear of being unable to integrate professionally due to language barriers. Once in Norway, W4 encountered difficulties in social integration, partly due to cultural differences and language barriers. She found it challenging to connect with Norwegians, noting the differences in social dynamics compared to Latin America. W4 admits how she believes Norwegians and Latin Americans think and act very differently, something she struggles to adapt (W4, 4). This struggle to adapt socially adds to her sense of dissonance as she navigates a new cultural landscape that contrasts sharply with her native social environment.

Moreover, W4 experiences systemic challenges related to her immigration status. She discusses the difficulties and frustrations of the immigration process, including annual residency permit renewals. She expresses a sense of feeling trapped and uncertain about her acceptance in Norwegian society, stating, "It is weird, I do not feel that Norway is the country #1 as many people say. I feel that here I do not have that many rights as a foreigner. I feel trapped" (W4, 3). This sentiment shows the impact of immigration policies on her sense of belonging and stability in Norway, further complicating her experience of cultural dissonance.

W5 experiences a profound sense of cultural dissonance in Norway, deeply rooted in her journey and the systemic challenges of immigration. She feels like an outsider, a feeling that persists even as she approaches Norwegian nationality. W5 shared, "Even now that I am about to become a Norwegian national, I still feel like a foreigner. I feel as if my words are not good enough. I feel as if my words here are unimportant" (W5, 7). W5 detailed her sense of exclusion from Norwegian society, regardless of her immigration status and the prospect of citizenship.

W5's marriage further complicates her immigration process experiences. W5 describes her initial reluctance to move to Norway, influenced by her first husband's idealized portrayal of the country and his controlling behavior after her arrival. She said, "It was weird because before I moved to Norway, my husband at the time could not

stop talking about how amazing Norway was... but once I came, he was very controlling, but at the same time, he did not support me on anything” (W5, 2). This stark contrast between her expectations and reality significantly contributes to her cultural dissonance. Moreover, securing her immigration status presented significant challenges for W5, adding to her instability and dissonance. She detailed the difficulties in obtaining a stable job and the absence of English translation in immigration services, which forced her to rely on her then-husband (W5, 2). This dependence and her struggle to establish herself independently in Norway intensify her feelings of dissonance and alienation.

This subchapter exploration of cultural dissonance and identity in transnational marriages offers insightful revelations by effectively examining, discussing, and analyzing the experiences of women who have married Norwegian men, focusing on how they navigate cultural dissonance in these relationships. It highlights their diverse challenges, such as feeling like outsiders despite changes in legal status and dealing with racial and class prejudices. This subchapter also sheds light on the impact of these experiences on their professional lives and personal autonomy, emphasizing the economic imbalances and dependencies linked to their immigrant status. Through these individual stories, the text paints a comprehensive picture of the relationship between cultural dissonance and identity in these women's lives in transnational marriages.

6.2 Social Isolation

This subchapter will analyze how social isolation is a critical issue in the lives of the five Latin-American interviewed women who have moved to Norway under a family reunification permit. The stories of W1, W2, W3, W4, and W5 bring to life the varied aspects of this isolation. W1 faces career limitations and dependency due to visa restrictions, deepening her sense of isolation. W2 deals with financial and relational strains in her marriage, feeling isolated by her husband's financial practices and the stress of relocating. W3 struggles with the undervaluation of her professional skills and a lack of social connections, enhancing her isolation. W4 encounters language and cultural barriers, making her struggle to integrate into the local community. Finally, W5 confronts challenges in language and an oppressive marital relationship, which significantly affect her independence and sense of belonging. These individual

experiences collectively illustrate the complex nature of social isolation within transnational marriages.

W1 feels frustrated and disempowered due to visa restrictions that limit her to part-time work, preventing her from pursuing her desired career path (W1, 9). This dependency on her husband for financial and legal stability in Norway significantly contributes to her isolation, as it hampers her ability to engage with her environment and develop her professional identity independently. W1 also expressed anxiety about the uncertainty and length of the visa approval process. The fear of rejection and the invasive requirement to prove the authenticity of her relationship further add to her stress (W1, 11). This bureaucratic process strains her emotionally and places her in limbo, where her future in Norway hangs in the balance, dependent on external validation.

W1 also discusses the cultural and social challenges she encounters. She feels disconnected from the Norwegian work culture, which does not align with her personality and values, intensifying her sense of isolation (W1, 4). Her limited work opportunities to socialize in a way that makes W1 comfortable and high living costs in Norway further restrict her social interactions and community engagement, deepening her isolation. These experiences of W1 underscore the complex nature of isolation for immigrants, where legal, financial, cultural, and emotional factors combine to create a challenging environment that affects their sense of belonging and identity.

In her interview, W2 shares her experiences, which showed some factors contributing to her isolation in Norway; for example, She struggles with the financial dynamics in their marriage, where her husband meticulously records additional expenses for later reimbursement (W2). This approach clashes with W2's cultural expectations of marital support, leading to feelings of unwelcome and isolation. She feels this financial arrangement undermines the mutual support and partnership she expected in marriage (W2, 2). As a consequence, the lack of mutual support further increased W2's feeling of isolation.

W2 also faces difficulties adjusting to a new country and managing financial insecurities, especially when her husband's career decisions lead to relocation. This move exacerbates her isolation, as she leaves behind the stability and familiarity of Oslo. W2 describes how these changes strain her trust in her husband and her sense of security in their relationship (W2). W2 is also determined to avoid becoming a housewife and

pursues education as a means of independence (W2). However, this pursuit also isolates her as she navigates being a student in a foreign country under financial constraints. This situation demonstrates the difficulties of her experience, where her drive for independence in a new country is both empowering and isolating.

W3 addresses her professional challenges, explaining how she worked as a nurse in her home country but had to take a cleaning job in Norway due to language barriers and lack of professional authorization (W3). Her husband's insistence on her working immediately upon arrival exacerbates her sense of devaluation and isolation (W3). As a result, she feels undervalued and unable to use her professional skills or pursue her passion (W3). These feelings of being undervalued result in a significant loss of self-esteem and identity for immigrants such as W3.

W3 finds her workplace competitive and not conducive to forming meaningful relationships (W3). Her natural preference for solitude, a trait she has had since her time in Latin America, further isolates her; consequently, she has a limited social network, with few friends, none Norwegian or Latin American (W3). This lack of a supportive social circle indicates her disconnection from her native and host communities. W3 also discusses the emotional impact of her marriage and immigration process. She reveals that she never loved her husband and felt coerced into the marriage for immigration purposes (W3). The constant threat of divorce and the stress of the immigration process, including language barriers and financial challenges, deepen her feelings of loneliness. These emotional struggles and her professional and social issues clearly depict W3's profound isolation in Norway.

W4 also reflects on the difficulties of integrating into Norwegian society and her loneliness. She points out the challenges posed by the language barrier and cultural differences, which make it hard for her to connect with locals (W4). A sense of exclusion marks her experience in the workplace and social settings as she struggles to understand and adapt to the local customs and social norms (W4). This cultural gap and her limited language proficiency leave her feeling disconnected from her surroundings.

W5 faced significant professional and linguistic barriers in Norway as she needed help to obtain certification as a qualified nurse due to her limited fluency in Norwegian (W5). Her language barrier hinders her career progression and limits her ability to engage socially and integrate into Norwegian society. The dynamics of W5's first marriage also played a crucial role in her experience of isolation. She moved to Norway reluctantly,

influenced by her husband, who later became controlling and abusive towards her (W5). Her husband's control extended to her finances and personal autonomy, intensifying her feelings of entrapment, as she described, "I was alone, I had nobody here" (W5). Her situation eventually led her to seek help at a crisis center. W5 contrasts her independent life before moving to Norway with her constrained life with her ex-husband, followed by the crisis center, highlighting a profound loss of independence and comfort. This contrast illustrates how her transnational marriage significantly contributed to her emotional and physical isolation.

W5 also discusses the challenges related to her immigration status. Initially entering Norway as a tourist, she faced repeated permit denials due to unstable employment. This instability contributed to her sense of insecurity and alienation. After divorcing her first husband, she applied for family reunification under her daughter's name, encountering bureaucratic hurdles and financial constraints. The high cost of obtaining Norwegian nationality remains a significant barrier, complicating her efforts to integrate fully into Norwegian society. These immigration challenges stress W5's ongoing struggle to establish a stable and secure life in Norway.

This subchapter analyzed how social isolation emerges as a significant and complex issue in the experiences of the five Latin American interviewed women in Norway. W1's narrative reveals how visa restrictions and financial dependence on her husband curtail her career development and amplify her isolation. W2's account shows the isolating effects of her marriage's financial dynamics and the challenges of adapting to a new country. W3's experience underscores the impact of professional devaluation and limited social support on her sense of isolation. W4 faces language and cultural barriers, which obstruct her integration and contribute to her feeling of being an outsider. Finally, W5's story highlights the struggles with language barriers and a controlling marital relationship, severely impacting her independence and sense of belonging. Together, these narratives provide a nuanced understanding of the personal and diverse experiences of social isolation in transnational marriages.

6.3 Navigating Stereotypes and Prejudices

This subchapter comprehensively analyzes the experiences of W1 to W5, the five women interviewed, and how they confront various prejudices ranging from doubts

about the authenticity of their relationships to expectations of conforming to traditional gender roles. This subchapter also delves into how these women, from different backgrounds, encounter and resist stereotypes about their language proficiency, professional qualifications, and social roles. Each woman exhibits a strong sense of agency, actively challenging and redefining the stereotypes imposed upon them. Their stories show their struggles, resilience, and determination to assert their identities and independence in a foreign cultural landscape like Norway.

W1 describes how often she dealt with people judging her relationship, specifically for immigration issues; it made her feel that people in Norway did not believe she and her husband loved each other (W1). W1 said, "We both love each other so much, yet people cannot see that ... you should see how they look at me; even my husband gets upset ... Norwegians hate confrontation, but one time I even had to stop him from asking some people to stop staring at us" (W1). "I hate having to prove my love to people that mistake me for some chick he saved" (W1). This stereotype suggests transnational marriages are more about convenience or economic gain than love or partnership. W1 also experienced prejudice based on language proficiency; her fluency in Norwegian often led to better treatment, highlighting a common bias against immigrants who lack language skills. These experiences reflect a broader tendency to judge immigrants by language proficiency and physical appearance, overshadowing their other qualities and contributions.

In response to the stereotypes, W1 actively combated these stereotypes, showcasing her agency. By speaking the language fluently, she disrupted the stereotype of immigrants as outsiders resistant to assimilation. Additionally, her portrayal of her marriage contradicted the stereotype of transnational marriages as purely transactional. She described a relationship based on mutual affection, support, and shared responsibilities, offering a more complex and authentic perspective of transnational marriages.

W2 actively resisted the expectation of becoming a housewife, a role often stereotypically assigned to immigrant women, especially from Latin America. This resistance highlighted her refusal to conform to traditional gender roles. Additionally, W2 encountered cultural stereotypes about her social class and background. In Norway, her unprivileged background in South America led to misunderstandings and

oversimplifications of her personal history, showcasing the prevalent prejudices against immigrant women's backgrounds in their host countries.

In response to these stereotypes, W2 exercised strong agency. She pursued higher education in Norway, a decision aimed at maintaining her independence and professional identity (W2). This move challenged the stereotype of an immigrant housewife and her commitment to self-reliance and personal growth became evident. Furthermore, W2 negotiated her financial independence within her marriage, challenging traditional gender roles and emphasizing her autonomy. Her approach to marriage and finances was a deliberate effort to maintain control over her life and resist conventional expectations of women in transnational marriages. The intersectionality of W2's identity significantly influenced her experiences in Norway. As a woman of color from a lower socio-economic background, she confronted multiple layers of identity, including her status as an immigrant, her cultural background, and her socio-economic status. These intersecting identities shaped her interactions in various contexts, from personal relationships to professional environments.

Despite W3's background as a nurse assistant, she faced expectations to work in low-skilled jobs, reflecting a common bias that often undervalues immigrant qualifications; however, with resilience, W3 navigated these challenges. Although She worked as a cleaner, a role imposed by her husband and language constraints, she did not let this define her (W3). Her determination to maintain her independence and self-worth despite the career shift showcased her adaptability and strength. The intersectional nature of W3's identity significantly influenced her experiences in Norway. As a South American woman, her immigrant status, professional background, and cultural and language barriers shaped her identity and how others perceived her. These intersecting factors played a crucial role in her personal and professional life. W3's story emphasizes the importance of understanding the complex nature of immigrant experiences, where multiple identity layers intersect with each other.

Despite her qualifications as a master's degree holder and an engineer, W4 was aware of the stereotypes and prejudices common to South American immigrant women (W4). She worried about being pushed into low-skilled jobs due to her immigrant status and the language barrier (W4). W4 also feared becoming a stereotypical stay-at-home wife, a role frequently assigned to immigrant women in transnational marriages (W4).

Her experiences in Norway demonstrate the challenge of overcoming these stereotypes and being recognized for her professional skills and ambitions.

Despite her concerns about the stereotypes, W4 sought work in her field in Norway, striving to maintain her professional identity, which is crucial for her self-worth and independence (W4). Her refusal to be limited to traditional roles imposed on immigrant women demonstrates her strong sense of agency. Additionally, W4 tried to integrate into Norwegian society by learning the language, which was essential for her career and social life. Despite the difficulties, her commitment to learning Norwegian and adapting to the new culture illustrates her resolve to overcome barriers and establish her place in Norwegian society. The intersectionality of W4's identity significantly influenced her experience in Norway. As a South American woman, she faced the challenges of being an immigrant, a professional, and a wife in a transnational marriage.

W5 struggled with a denied permit due to unstable employment, reflecting a common bias against immigrants' economic contributions. Additionally, her experience with a controlling first husband underscored the stereotype of immigrant women being dependent and submissive in transnational marriages. By demonstrating significant agency, W5 actively resisted these stereotypes. She made a decisive move to a crisis center, marking a bold step towards independence and breaking free from a controlling relationship. This action was necessary in giving her the first step at asserting her autonomy in Norway. Moreover, W5 pursued legal avenues to secure her stay in Norway, applying for a family reunification permit under her daughter's name. Her perseverance in dealing with the complex immigration system, despite numerous obstacles, highlighted her resilience and determination to establish a stable life in Norway. W5's identity as a North American immigrant woman significantly influenced her experiences in Norway. Her journey intertwined her roles as an immigrant, a mother, and a professional nurse. These intersecting identities shaped her approach to overcoming immigration challenges, professional barriers, and personal struggles with their complex identities in a new cultural and social environment.

The experiences of the interviewed women vividly demonstrate the significant challenge of navigating stereotypes and prejudices, as presented in this subchapter. This subchapter analysis concludes with how women identified as W1 through W5 confront and overcome various stereotypes in Norway. These women from diverse backgrounds challenge assumptions about their relationships, professional capabilities, and social

roles. They resist traditional roles often imposed on immigrant women in transnational marriages and redefine them with strength and agency. Their stories, as detailed in the text, stand as examples of their resilience and determination to maintain their identities and autonomy. These narratives highlight the critical need to recognize and challenge the stereotypes facing immigrant women, showcasing their ability to navigate and transform their experiences in a new cultural context.

6.4 Defining Agency in the Context of Intersectionality

This subchapter delves into how women exercise agency, particularly those in transnational marriages. Through the lens of intersectionality, this analysis subchapter discusses various instances where these women assert their independence and decision-making power. It explores how their agency manifests at the intersection of their identities, including race, class, and immigration status.

W1 expressed how she takes charge of certain chores, stating, “I am in charge of the clothes washings and the bathrooms because I do not like the way that he does it” (W1, 17). Her decision shows her assertiveness in household management. She and her husband share responsibilities, with him cooking and cleaning the kitchen (W1). This arrangement challenges traditional gender roles, demonstrating W1’s influence in her home life.

Financial independence is another area where W1 exercises agency. She revealed, “Yes, before it was me the one who had the money. I still have much money saved up, so if anything happens, I am good” (17). Despite the dependency risks associated with immigration, she maintains financial autonomy. Her ability to contribute equally to expenses and her husband’s readiness to shoulder more financial responsibility reflects a partnership based on equality and support.

Finally, W1 recognizes racial and gender dynamics in her marriage. She discussed her decision against having children, emphasizing, “I did not want to feel guilty or force myself to a decision that I did not want to do; that is why I told him from the beginning what I wanted” (16). Her clear communication and decision-making demonstrate her agency in personal life choices. Her understanding of potential power imbalances and her efforts to address them show how her race and immigration status intersect with her

gender, influencing her agency. Overall, W1's actions in her marriage, spanning domestic, financial, and personal decisions, show her autonomy and assertiveness.

As previously mentioned, W2 shows agency in her educational and career decisions as she states (W2, 3). Her decision reflects her determination to maintain her professional identity and not just be a "housewife," as she refers to, but a professional, highly skilled worker. Her approach to securing her education in Norway before relocating demonstrates her passion and foresight, challenging the traditional expectations of immigrant women who often face pressure to conform to domestic roles. However, during her time as a family reunion permit recipient, she could not secure a full-time job because of legal and bureaucratic processes and had to accept her husband's help. Nowadays, W2 mentions how everything in her household is equally divided, including their home monthly payments (W2). W2 even shared how she makes just as much as her husband (W2). Despite the initial challenges and limitations imposed by her immigration status, W2 successfully confronted these barriers to achieve professional and financial parity with her husband.

W3's efforts to make the best of her situation, where after arriving in Norway, her husband forced her to work as a cleaner despite being a qualified nurse assistant in her home country, highlights her adaptability to challenging circumstances and her strength in the face of significant personal and professional obstacles. W3 marriage dynamics reveal her agency when W3 acknowledges that even when her husband had the upper hand as a Norwegian national and the one with the best economic standing between them, she always stood proud, as she said, "There were times he tried to humiliate me, and say mean things to me, but I never let him do it" (W3). Despite the power imbalance in her marriage, her refusal to be belittled or undermined is a testament to her inner strength and courage. Moreover, W3 independently manages her immigration process, facing the challenges of annual visa renewals and immigration appointments without her husband's support and without any Norwegian knowledge at the time (W3). Her resilience in handling these tasks shows her determination to persevere even when alone in a foreign country.

W4's agency is her decision to continue her career as an engineer in Norway. Despite the challenges posed by language barriers and the potential for cultural differences in the workplace, W4 remained committed to her professional identity (W4). W4's decision exhibits her dedication to her career. Her choice to pursue her profession

in a new country demonstrates her independence and self-reliance, challenging traditional gender roles and expectations.

W4's approach to the immigration process also shows her exercise of agency as she started her immigration paperwork in her home country, a strategic move that allowed her to work while waiting to complete the process. Her decision reflects her planning, ensuring she would not be in limbo upon arriving in Norway. It also shows her understanding of immigration obstacles and her determination to maintain her autonomy during this transitional period; furthermore, W4's social adaptation in Norway reveals her agency in navigating a new cultural environment. Despite finding it hard to make friends due to language barriers and cultural differences, she appreciates Norway's safety and opportunities.

W5's decision to move to a crisis center reflects her agency; after dealing for a year with her first husband's controlling and abusive nature, this decision showcases her decision to seek a safer environment for herself. Even though that meant being apart from her daughter that year, W5, and being alone, she knew they would be reunited once she was in a better situation (W5). If that meant, Despite the challenges and uncertainties of leaving her marital home, W5 prioritized her well-being and independence. This move signifies her resilience and refusal to remain in an oppressive situation, highlighting her strength and self-reliance.

W5's journey in securing her professional status in Norway also demonstrates her agency. As a nurse working towards certification in Norway, she navigates the challenges of establishing her career in a foreign country. This pursuit reflects her commitment to maintaining her professional identity.

6.5 Concluding Insights: Bridging Cultural Gaps

By using intersectionality, Chapter 6 revealed the complex interplay of race, class, and immigrant status in shaping their experiences. Through their interviews, W1 through W5, the women shared how they confronted cultural dissonance, social isolation, and stereotypes. This chapter showed how these women's layered identities affected their adaptation to cultural and legal challenges in transnational marriages. This intersectional perspective enriches the understanding of transnational marriages, showing the diverse impacts of these marriages on Latin American women. This chapter will conclude with a

call for empathetic, intersectionality informed approaches to support women in transnational marriages, advocating for a community that embraces and supports all its members.

7. Chapter Seven, Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Findings, Implications and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the key findings from the research I conducted about the experiences of Latin American women who have migrated to Norway and joined their husbands through family reunification. This chapter presents the significant themes and insights from the qualitative data analysis of this thesis based on the interviews conducted with five Latin American women. The question of this thesis is: What are the experiences and challenges of these women in their transnational marriages? This question not only probes into their narratives but also touches on broader social and cultural dynamics. I focused on their experiences, identities, and gender shaped their lives as immigrants in Norway. This research contributes to gender studies and migration, filling a critical gap in the literature about transnational marriages and the limitations encountered by Latin American women in family reunification processes.

This study's importance extends beyond our participants' stories and offers insights into intersectional issues involving race, gender, and migration. These insights are helpful for policymakers, scholars, and communities involved in immigration and multicultural integration. In the upcoming sections, I present my research findings.

1. **Intersection of Privileges and Oppression with Immigration Status:**

The intertwining of immigrant status with ethnicity, gender, and professional roles affects societal integration. For example, W2's husband's family's first expectation was for her to become a wife with a stereotypical, gendered role (with domestic responsibilities) because of her cultural and racial background (46). Cultural and racial stereotypes negatively impact self-perceptions. This negative self-perception may be compounded for immigrants. Immigrants may experience cultural dissonance. W1's experience points to the challenges of cultural integration and identity negotiation in transnational marriages. For example, W1 expresses discomfort in public due to the attention their interracial couple status attracts.

Recommendation: Government agencies can increase public awareness of existing resources, such as public and community programs, to support immigrants as they integrate into Norwegian society. Continue to fund and support programs that address the needs of immigrant women, people who do not speak Norwegian, and the provision of case management to immigrants.

1. Provide all visa applicants a user-friendly, comprehensive guide to promote awareness and utilization of local resources and public programs that applicants and their family members may benefit from. This could include information about nongovernmental organizations, how to access healthcare and mental healthcare, and crisis support intervention.
2. Implement culturally-sensitive educational programs and public awareness campaigns to combat stereotypes and prejudices related to ethnicity, gender, and professional roles of immigrant women. Encourage respect and inclusive practices in workplaces and communities to enhance societal integration.
3. Provide resources and programs that assist immigrants in dealing with cultural dissonance and integration, including cultural orientation sessions, intercultural communication workshops, and mental health support. Develop community-based programs that facilitate social connections and support networks for immigrant women. It could involve organizing social events, community mentorship programs, and providing spaces where women can meet and share experiences.

4. **Impact of Immigrant Status on Agency and Autonomy:**

The varied experiences of women, ranging from financial dependency to emotional labor, emphasize the gendered nature of immigration. For instance, W3's story revealed her struggle with immigration paperwork and the lack of support from her husband (p. 3). W3's was experiencing financial dependency, a loss of autonomy, and social isolation. The deepening sense of isolation due to career limitations, financial strains, and relational challenges highlights the multifaceted nature of social isolation in immigration contexts. W3's experience begins to overlap with the experience of W1, W2, and W4. For instance, W1's career is limited due to visa restrictions, and W2 deals with financial

and relational strains in her marriage. The determination of women like W4 to maintain professional identity and independence in Norway showcases their resilience and agency. W4 was determined to maintain her professional identity and independence in Norway, refusing to settle into the traditional role of a housewife. Her proactive approach to establishing a fulfilling life in Norway is a testament to her strength and agency (p. 9).

The contrasting experiences of women from different socioeconomic backgrounds highlight the role of financial stability in easing the integration process. For example, W1, from a well-standing family, accessed education in Norway without financial worries, contrasting with W2's lack of support and financial challenges with loans (p. 46). The loss of income, professional identity and dependence on spouses, as seen in W5's case, highlights the significant impact of immigrant status on personal autonomy and agency. For example, W5's career and income were negatively impacted due to immigration visa regulations that did not permit her to work for a time. Strict visa regulations around work permission and demonstrating financial stability rendered her completely dependent on her husband (48).

Recommendation:

1. Adjust visa regulations that permit working legally in Norway under the family reunification visa. Reform immigration laws, policies, and regulations to define contemporary standards of marital equality and to ensure equal treatment of all visa applicants. Introduce gender-sensitive approaches in immigration services and support networks. Train immigration officials on gender-based issues, such as abuse, domestic violence, and bias and discrimination and provide legal assistance for visa applicants navigating immigration processes.
2. Develop targeted support programs that address the specific needs of immigrant women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Create policies, public programs, and support systems that help immigrants maintain and grow their professional identities, experiences, and skills that promote self-reliance and independence. It could include financial aid for training to facilitate the work permit process, offer professional and

vocational training, and other relevant resources that promote and facilitate the integration of immigrants into Norwegian society.

3. Recognize and support the resilience and agency of immigrant women. Create platforms for them to share their experiences and contribute to community life. Encourage their participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
4. **Gender Dynamics in Immigration:** The varied experiences of women, ranging from financial dependency to emotional labor, emphasize the gendered nature of immigration. For instance, W3's story revealed her struggle with immigration paperwork and the lack of support from her husband, who left her to face the task alone (p. 3). W3's struggle highlights a spectrum of experiences, from dependency and loss of autonomy to emotional burdens and social isolation. The deepening sense of isolation due to career limitations, financial strains, and relational challenges highlights the multifaceted nature of social isolation in immigration contexts. For instance, W1's career is limited due to visa restrictions, and W2 deals with financial and relational strains in her marriage.

Recommendation:

1. Reform immigration laws, policies, and regulations to define contemporary standards of marital equality and to ensure equal treatment of all visa applicants.
2. Introduce gender-sensitive approaches in immigration services and support networks. Train immigration officials on gender-based issues, such as abuse, domestic violence, and bias and discrimination and provide legal assistance for visa applicants navigating immigration processes.
3. **Socioeconomic and Bureaucratic Navigation:** Economic challenges directly affect bureaucratic navigation, as seen in W5's permit denial due to unstable employment. For example, when the authorities denied W5's

permit due to her unstable employment. W5's permit denial showcases the critical role of stable employment in the immigration process.

Recommendation: Provide clear guidance in bureaucratic processes for immigrants, especially regarding employment and residency permits. Offer financial counseling and support services to help women navigate these challenges effectively.

1. **Cultural and Racial Challenges:** Cultural and racial stereotypes negatively impact self-perceptions. For example, W2 talks about how she was perceived as a trophy wife by her husband's family because of her cultural and racial background (W2).

Recommendation: Foster cultural sensitivity, for example, include cultural exchange programs, community dialogues, and educational initiatives that promote understanding and respect for diverse backgrounds.

1. **Resilience and Agency:** The determination of women like W4 to maintain professional identity and independence in Norway showcases their resilience and agency. W4, for instance, is determined to maintain her professional identity and independence in Norway, refusing to settle into the role of a housewife. Her proactive approach to establishing a fulfilling life in Norway is a testament to her strength and agency (p. 9).

Recommendation: Recognize and support the resilience and agency of immigrant women. Create platforms for them to share their experiences and contribute to community life. Encourage their participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

1. **Navigating Stereotypes and Prejudices:** The active challenge and redefinition of stereotypes by these women, such as doubts about the authenticity of their relationships and traditional gender role expectations, underscore their resilience.

Recommendation: Advocate for and implement policies that challenge and change stereotypes and prejudices against immigrant women. Encourage media representation that portrays the diversity and complexity of their experiences and contributions.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

- **Qualitative Research Limitations:** This study, employing a qualitative research design, inherently faces limitations such as a smaller sample size and limited generalizability. While qualitative research allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and lived experiences, it is also subject to potential bias and subjectivity from the researcher's interpretation of the data. This limitation is crucial as it can affect the objectivity and credibility of the study's findings.
- **Researcher Bias and Subjectivity:** As previously noted, a significant limitation of qualitative research is the potential for researcher bias and subjectivity. Since the interpretation of data in qualitative research heavily relies on the researcher's perspective, there is a risk that personal biases could influence the findings and conclusions. This risk is particularly pertinent in studies dealing with complex social and cultural phenomena, as it can undermine the objectivity and credibility of the research.
- **Sample Size and Scope:** The study's focus on a small, specific group - Latin American women in transnational marriages in Norway - limits its scope and the ability to generalize findings to a broader population. While this focus provides detailed insights into the experiences of these women, it also means that the findings may not apply to other groups or contexts. Additionally, the initial intention to include both genders in the study was revised due to practical considerations, further limiting the study's scope.
- **Data Collection Constraints:** The recruitment process for the study faced practical constraints. Initially, a more encompassing approach to data collection was envisioned, including interviews with both Latino men and Latina women. However, due to time limitations, the scope was confined exclusively to Latin women married to Norwegian men. This limitation affects the comparative analysis of gender dynamics and potentially overlooks contrasting experiences rooted in gender.
- **Ethical Considerations and Participant Recruitment:** Ethical considerations and the topic's sensitive nature posed challenges in participant recruitment. While there was enthusiasm among Latin women to participate, the sensitive nature of

the topic and the potential hesitation to share personal experiences could have influenced who chose to participate and what they were willing to share. This aspect could affect the depth and range of data collected, impacting the study's comprehensiveness.

7.2.1 Conclusion

This thesis shows the lives of Latin American women in Norway within the context of transnational marriages and family reunification. Their stories reveal the impact of race, gender, and migration on their lives, highlighting significant challenges like cultural dissonance, social isolation, and struggles with agency, autonomy, and professional identity.

There are actionable steps we can take to support immigrant women better. By reforming immigration laws with a gender perspective, smoothing cultural integration, and addressing each woman's unique needs, immigration and integration policies can work towards a more inclusive Norwegian society.

However, this study has its limitations. While providing rich, detailed insights, its qualitative nature limits the broader applicability of its findings and introduces the possibility of researcher bias. The focus on a specific group of women narrows the scope of the study, and practical challenges during data collection further restrict its reach. Despite these limitations, this research offers valuable perspectives on a group often overlooked in academic discussions.

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