

A Case of Definition

*Understandings of Gender Equality in the Context of
Immigrant Integration*

Nikol Mard



**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

11. 5. 2015

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Hanne Cecilie Kavli for her guidance and insightful comments.

I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Sara Elisabeth Sellevold Orning for providing a new, fresh perspective.

I would like to thank Unn Elisabet Rogg for believing in me.

I also want to thank Muni Kwarasey for inspiration.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my husband Ove Mard for his support and endless patience.

1. Introduction: Why study gender equality in integration courses?

The Introductory Law passed in 2003 represents the most comprehensive and systematic effort in integration of immigrants and refugees in the modern history of immigration in Norway (Djuve and Kavli 2007). The ultimate goal of integration measures is immigrants' participation in the labour market (Introductory Law 2003 § 1). At the same time, with the recent revival of nation-centric rhetoric and a redefinition of national core values across the Western world, including Norway, integration measures aim to introduce immigrants to values that form the basis of the nation and its cohesion (Kymlicka 2010). Given the importance of gender equality as one of the values central to the Norwegian state, and subsequently the national identity of its citizens (Lister 2009), research on how this value is communicated to people who arrive to the country with hopes of becoming its citizens is called for. In spite of a seemingly unequivocal understanding of the concept of gender equality, different definitions and interpretations can be found on different administrative levels and among different actors in the integration process. Of a special interest to this thesis is to what extent the definitions described in official government policies overlap with the interpretations of the people who implement them and are in their capacity of the so-called street level bureaucrats arguably the actual policy makers (Lipsky 2010). This study aims to address and interpret some of these differences.

Norway prides itself on being the most gender equal country in the world, according to the World Economic Forum and its Global Gender Gap Report (www.weforum.org). The report that captures “the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress” (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013) has been issued on a yearly basis since 2006 and Norway regularly features among the top five countries. In the year 2014 Norway ranked third, with Iceland scoring the highest, followed by Finland in second place. The top five countries also include Sweden in fourth place and Denmark in fifth; the fact that Nordic countries are on top of the list is rather unsurprising, given their international reputation as gender equal countries.

At the same time, Norway is becoming an increasingly popular destination for immigrants, a fact that is connected to the economic boom following the

discovery of oil reserves in the 1960s. Norway now has a population of labour immigrants who came in the 1960s and 1970s, their family members who came through family reunification, more recent work immigrants from new member states of the European union, and last but not least refugees and asylum seekers being admitted on humanitarian grounds based in international agreements on refugee quotas (Brochmann 2003). The resulting diversity of the Norwegian population prompted the introduction of measures both in the field of immigration with attempts to restrict it as early as 1975 (ibid. 359), and in the field of integration. The focus of this thesis lies on integration and the representation of Norwegian core values within its process.

There exists a large body of work on how the increasingly heterogeneous and multicultural society in the Nordics and elsewhere has influenced governmental gender equality policies (Langvasbråten 2008, Okin 1999, Phillips 2007). The topic of how gender equality is reflected in multicultural and integration measures is not quite that well-articulated. How gender equality influences multicultural policies, such as the Introductory Law that is analysed further in this thesis, is not a subject of wider public or academic debate, other than in instances of what Phillips calls ‘hijacking the gender equality agenda,’ by people who use the argument of gender inequality in minority groups as a support line of reasoning against immigration and multiculturalism¹ in general (Phillips 2007: 2). These debates create a false dichotomy of gender equality as an expression of the majority culture on the one side and cultural expressions of the minority groups on the other, making these two seem irreconcilable. The concept of human agency that influences people’s behaviours and actions perhaps more than their cultural background, and the will to make the notions of culture and gender equality compatible and mutually inclusive, are the two most obvious gaps in these debates.²

¹ I am using the term multiculturalism as defined by Will Kymlicka (2010) as a set of public policies rather than cultural sensibility and a part of a “larger human rights revolution in relation to ethnic and racial diversity” (ibid. 99-100). It can, however, be also understood as a mode of integration, a view preferred by Tariq Modood (2013) who sees multiculturalism as two-way integration where both members of the majority community, immigrants and ethnic minorities are required to participate in the integration process, while simultaneously involving these on both group and individual level.

² Citing Phillip’s argument for multiculturalism I also adopt her definition of culture which she criticizes: “Cultures were still largely regarded as separate and distinct—so people were either in one culture or another. Each culture was presumed to form an internally coherent whole, regulated by a system of values, practices, and shared assumptions that outsiders might find it hard to sympathise

Why, then, is it important to analyse the concept of gender equality in the context of immigration and immigrant integration? In today's Euro-Atlantic society gender equality is considered achieved by most people, either through two waves of feminism in the twentieth century or, as is the case in former communist countries, through the forced entrance of women in the labour market. Gender equality is perceived as a non-issue by the general public when major issues in Euro-Atlantic societies are discussed, and especially in Scandinavia gender equality is largely taken for granted (Borchorst 2008). However, that changes significantly as soon as non-Western societies, either in their respective home countries or as minorities in 'first-world' Western countries, become a topic of discussion, as Abu-Lughod illustrates with the example of honour killings and their representations in the West (2011). Despite being far from achieved, as statistics on income levels, leading positions, and political representation show us, gender equality in mainstream debates (and some expert debates, too, see Okin's article 'Is multiculturalism bad for women?' (1999) for an example) is presented as a lived reality for people in Euro-Atlantic democracies. In the comparison with non-Western or non-European countries and their status or approach to issues of gender equality, the construct of a gender equal society is put up against the real, lived reality of a society that is not gender equal and does not present itself as such. Gressgård and Jacobsen point out this common methodological mistake:

The stereotype of 'the other' creates or reproduces a 'we' that is mostly not problematised. (Is it 'we in the West', 'we liberals' or 'we feminists' that expect that immigrants adapt to the demands for equality between the sexes?) This 'we' alludes to an ideal, without 'the others' being able to present their own alternative ideals. It is 'the others'' practices oppressive to women that are being set up against Okin's ideal of equality. This can be called a comparative miss - 'our ideals' are compared with 'their reality.' (2002: 199, my translation)

with or understand. (...) It was assumed, moreover, that the values of the culture were broadly shared, and that these values explained why members of the cultural group behaved the way they do. Understanding why someone acted or thought in a particular way then became a matter of understanding the underlying principles of their culture" (2007: 42-43).

That way, it has been argued, the concept of gender equality functions as an “ethnic borderline between ‘them’ and ‘us’” (Melby, Ravn and Wetterberg 2008: 3). Lila Abu-Lughod addresses this phenomenon in a succinct way:

the deep moral conviction people feel about the rightness of saving the [minority] women (...) is fed by something else that cannot be separated from our current geopolitical relations. (...) Representing Muslim women as abused makes us forget the violence and oppression in our own midst. (...) Ultimately, saving Muslim women allows us to ignore the complex entanglements in which we are all implicated and creates a polarization that places feminism only on the side of the West. (Do Muslim women need saving? Time.com, 2013)

The question of gender equality becomes a tool for enhancing ‘othering’ in a geopolitical sense (Diez 2004).

In the case of Scandinavia, with its traditionally strong rhetoric of equality, the situation becomes even more paradoxical: “Scandinavian welfare states tend to support a gender hierarchy among ethnic ‘others’ and to construct difference, quite contrary to the aims of the official equality policy” (Melby, Ravn and Wetterberg 2008: 15), as is shown in the example of Siim’s research on the impact of gendered political reforms on immigrant families in Denmark (Siim 2008) and Mulinari’s article on gender equality as a differentiating factor for national belonging (Mulinari 2008).

This thesis wants to shed light on the way the above-mentioned ideal of gender equality is translated into practice, in the context of immigrant integration that is most prone to the comparative miss that Gressgård and Jacobsen write about. Gender equality as one of Scandinavian core values is “widely shared by the citizens of Scandinavian countries and constitute an important component of national identity in those countries” (Cox in Lister 2009: 245). But what exactly does gender equality mean and to whom? I will look at several documents produced at the government level that deal with immigrant integration and examine explicit and implicit definitions of gender equality. I will then proceed to what Lipsky calls the street bureaucrat level – the arena where officials interact directly with the public and thereby represent the frontlines of government policy (Lipsky 2010) and analyse

the definitions and opinions of case workers and course teachers involved with the Introduction course on the subject of gender equality, as well as their perception of the relevance of this topic for the newly arrived immigrants and refugees. This will enable me to show similarities and differences between the official stance, which is the ‘ideal’, and the experienced reality of both street level bureaucrats’ lives and the lives of newly arrived immigrants and refugees as perceived by the street level bureaucrats.

1.1 Main research questions

The thesis, divided into two parts, aims to answer several questions. In the first part the main questions are: how is gender equality defined in official integration related documents? And how is it problematised in the context of immigration and integration? These two questions will be answered with a help of content and discourse analysis of relevant and available documents, including the Introduction law, the guidelines on how to use the law (the so-called *rundskriv*), Norwegian official reports (NOU), and course guidelines for teachers (where available). In the second part of the thesis the focus will lie on teachers and caseworkers involved with the Introduction scheme, and the questions are as follows: how do people who work with immigrants and refugees define gender equality? How do they present it to the immigrants and refugees? How do the teachers and case workers perceive the responses of immigrants and refugees when gender equality concepts are presented and what are the challenges that arise in relation to this? The answers to these questions will be based on analyses of in-depth interviews with people who work with immigrants and refugees in the introduction course. I will employ elements of discourse analysis and frame analysis as defined by Goffman (1974) together with Nancy Fraser’s work on recognition and redistribution (1995) and its implications for gender equality (1996). I will look at similarities and differences between the official understanding of gender equality and the way people in public services understand them, interpret them and communicate them to newly arrived immigrants.

To see the complete picture of the whole integration process, one more dimension would be desirable in this thesis. Instead of assuming the immigrants' reactions and positions from the way they are perceived by the case workers and teachers, asking the course participants themselves about their perception of the way gender equality is presented in the courses would provide more valuable and reliable information and would allow me to draw better conclusions regarding the efficiency of the courses. This, however, would require resources that are not available to me at the time of writing this thesis, specifically access to the course participants, and interpreters enabling communication with newly arrived immigrants and refugees whose language skills might be limited to their mother tongue. Adding this very important dimension to the overall picture might be a suggestion for future research in this field.³

1.2 Changing discourse⁴ on immigration and integration and the reflection in policies

For better comprehension of the topic of this thesis it is important to understand in what societal climate the recent integration measures occur and why it is relevant to research values in this context. The systematization and new organization of integration efforts in Norway that were influenced by a pan-Atlantic attitude shift in the mid-1990s toward immigration and integration resulted in the adoption of the Introductory Law in 2003. The law is aimed at newly arrived refugees and immigrants from non-Western countries and addresses both rights and duties. The participants have an obligation to attend Norwegian language training, to learn about Norwegian society, and to take part in various employment measures. As

³ In 2008 a group of five master students at the University of Oslo wrote a joint thesis based on a project from the Department of Work and Inclusion focusing on how the compulsory course in societal knowledge was perceived by its participants (Johnsen, Yousefi, Rønning, Kindt, Katralen 2008). They gained access to the course participants through their affiliation with the Department and other related institutions; nevertheless they struggled with the language barrier and admit this influences their findings. Any research concerning Introduction scheme participants then most probably requires funding to cover the costs of interpreters' services.

⁴ I am using the concept of discourse in the Foucaultian understanding, referring to "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern" (Weedon 1987: 108).

compensation for their participation in these various qualification measures, they are entitled to a fixed economic benefit. The primary goal of both the language and societal knowledge program and the labour market assistance program is participation in paid work and financial self-sufficiency of immigrants.

This shift towards more ‘nation-cohesion oriented’ integration discourse brought along the need to formulate a clear and precise definition of core Norwegian values (gender equality being one of them) that the government wanted newly-arrived non-European immigrants and refugees to become familiar with, through newly approved systematic education programs. Immigrants are expected to become familiar with these values in the process of integration and adapt to the boundaries formed by these values. However, the definition of the core values, including gender equality, is open to interpretations by those transmitting the message. This is due to the nature of all the activities that are part of the curriculum of the integration scheme such as conversations in the classroom, job counselling sessions etc. These are all situations where the cultural knowledge is transferred by teachers and case workers, situations where ‘people meet people’ (Kavli in personal conversation), that are inevitably liable to the influence of the ‘human factor’, be it cultural background and life experience, or momentary life situation or mood. The teachers, case workers and program advisors interpreting the core Norwegian values for the participants of the integration scheme thereby not only implement the government policies on integration, they can be seen as the actual policy-makers (Lipsky 2010). Whose definition of the core values then do the immigrants receive? By looking both at the government documents and talking to case workers and teachers I will look for common traits and significant differences in these two viewpoints.

The Introduction scheme is an especially relevant arena for studying how gender equality is translated from an abstract theoretical concept into the practical language of everyday life. The participants in the Introduction scheme are newly arrived immigrants from non-Western countries whose cultures are assumed to be significantly different from Norwegian culture.⁵ The need for a clear articulation of values is therefore at its strongest, while the expectations about immigrants adopting the Norwegian ‘ideal’ of gender equality is simultaneously at its most intense when

⁵ For a more detailed discussion on this topic, see page 24.

the teachers and case workers are confronted with ‘the otherness’ of the newly arrived immigrants and refugees who are participating in the obligatory two-year program.

1.3 Gender equality and integration

In order to examine how gender equality is being represented in the integration discourse, I first need to consider different understandings of equality in general in Scandinavia. The context of gender equality and integration is quite specific in the Scandinavian countries. Gender equality is only a part of the quest for overall equality, which, looking at the gender gap index results above, seems to be a trait common to all the Nordic countries (Longva 2003: 153). Some authors describe this as passion for equality (Lister 2009: 246), others claim it is rather ‘antipathy for difference’ which is grounded in a “normative expectation of conformity in behaviour, experience, and awareness, to an unquestioned cultural pattern embedded in, and structured by, daily practice (...) To be equal is first and foremost to be alike” (Longva 2003: 154). Viewed through the eyes of a foreigner whose experience with Nordic ways of life is rather brief, I tend to side with Longva’s opinion and see Nordic equality as a lack and dislike of difference. This approach, after all, is mirrored in the widely accepted self-understanding of Scandinavian nations portrayed in the so-called Janteloven, the law of Jante (Avant and Knutsen 1993) that promotes conformity and puts the needs of the community above the needs of an individual.

The ‘passion for equality’ has been institutionalised through the concept of the welfare state in the broadest definition of the word, even though one might argue that the welfare state is mostly concerned with the issue of class.⁶ I will have a closer look at the Nordic brand of the welfare state as it is crucial for understanding the development of Norwegian society in the past fifty years. I will briefly touch on other forms of equality, or rather ‘likeness’ or ‘equity’ (*likhet*) in my quest to paint a complex picture of the background and history of integration efforts in Norway.

⁶ This is implied in the description of the development of ‘equality terminology’ that is detailed later in this chapter.

However, for the purposes of this thesis I will mostly focus on the institutionalisation of gender equality.

Gender equality became a part of the Norwegian legal system in 1978 when the Gender Equality Act (*Likestillingsloven*) was passed (Longva 2003: 156). Two years later gender equality was listed among the three most important aspects of ‘Norwegianness’: “three holy principles of Norwegian polity (from which, allegedly, no deviance would be tolerated) were introduced in a late 1980s White Paper: democracy, gender equality and children’s rights” (Brochmann and Djuve, 2013: 224). The preoccupation of the government with furthering achievements in the field of gender equality has been called *state feminism*, a term coined by Helga Hernes who defines it as “feminism from above in the form of gender equality and social policies” (Hernes in Borchorst 1998: 164).

The Scandinavian welfare state has been shaped first and foremost by the need to address class differences (Borchorst 1998: 163). The institutionalisation of class cooperation (workers’ and employers’ organizations) played a decisive role in the formation of the specific type of the welfare state (*ibid.*). With gender equality institutionalised by the Gender Equality Act on the background of the already existing welfare state, the need to distinguish between class equality and gender equality arose (*ibid.*). Words *likhet* and *likestilling* started to be used to differentiate between class equality and gender equality. Hernes argues that this distinction signifies differences in power and interest behind them, concluding that “women’s interests become defined as special interests, which according to the precepts of the prevailing ideology, should not be confused with the dominant and common interests” (Hernes 1987: 19 in Borchorst 1998: 163). The term *likestilling* grew to be used in political measures for purposes other than achieving gender equality, especially for efforts aimed at promoting rights of ethnic minorities (ethnic equality); this reflects the growing diversity of the Norwegian population in the last two decades.

The institutionalisation of gender equality leads to the concept acquiring normative qualities. Gressgård and Jacobsen (2003) in their analysis of the 1996–97 Report to the Storting No. 17 (Innst. S. 1996–7) claim that equal status between the genders is turned into a universal norm (through the Gender Equality Act) and “at

the same time as the norm is universalized, however, it is annexed as a part of what is to count as ‘Norwegian’” (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003: 75). They further make a connection between integration and women’s liberation, and conclude that “gender and equal status make up an important, albeit non-negotiable, part of Norwegian integration policies. In other words, it goes without saying that, the Gender Equality Act and Norwegian practices must form the basis of integration policies” (ibid.: 74). Yet after the discursive shift from multiculturalism towards national values (Kymlicka 2010) it no longer goes without saying what forms the basis of integration policies.

When Norway became a popular destination for immigrants from non-Western countries, especially in the recent two decades, the increasingly heterogeneous population prompted the demand for explicit definition of core Norwegian values⁷, following the trend towards redefinition of national values and national cohesion. This shift is, however, not specific to Norway. The trend towards multiculturalism was clear until the mid-1990 across the Western world; since then one could observe a backlash and tendencies to return back to the homogenous nation, values and identity (Kymlicka 2010).

At the turn of the millennium there occurred a shift in Norwegian integration policy, “from a ‘multiculturalist’ freedom to maintain cultural practices, to a more explicit focus on social cohesion” (Midtbøen and Teigen 2014: 274). Midtbøen and Teigen detected this shift through a policy analysis of White Paper no. 49 – *Diversity through inclusion and participation*, of 2003 – 2004 (ibid.). It then became necessary to define what it means to be a Norwegian, to behave like one, for new arrivals to be able to comply with these standards. Given the prominent status of gender equality among values important in Norway, it has been understandably assumed that this would also have a prominent place on the integration agenda. In the Norwegian Official Report 15 from 2012 (NOU 2012: 15. Kap 4: Idégrunnlaget for likestilling) equality is presented as a matter of justice, in Fraser’s understanding of justice as parity of participation (2005: 5). It follows that in order to be a just

⁷ It is not within the scope of this thesis to describe in detail the political changes and debates that formed the background to this phenomenon. However, some have argued that the pan-European rise of the populist right wing and anti-immigration parties mirroring the sentiments of the population, together with the critical stance of the centre-left that felt the immigrants were being failed by the system, caused the change in rhetoric and approaches to the topic of immigration and integration (Valenta and Bunar 2010: 470, Kymlicka 2010: 97).

society, Norway has to promote and ensure equality for everyone, and gender equality is one of its important dimensions.

In the second chapter I will define the main concepts used in the debates on immigration, integration, and gender equality, and briefly describe their history. I will then outline theories that will be used in the analysis of the data. In the third chapter I will describe my own position in the research field and the methods I used in gathering the data. The fourth chapter consists of analysis of selected integration-related documents, fifth chapter analysis interviews with street level bureaucrats. I will then conclude my findings in chapter six and suggest topics for future research and discussions.

2. Theories and concepts

In the introduction part of this thesis I have been using the concepts of gender equality, immigration, integration, and welfare state without any clear definition. It is necessary to clarify what each of these concepts mean and what the historical and societal context is for their current use. To understand today's efforts to integrate immigrants I need to look back at the Norwegian history of immigration as well as the development of the welfare state, in which Norwegian nationalism and nation building played a significant role. It is also important to understand how the development of gender equality policies and the welfare state are interconnected and determine each other in order to be able to grasp the implications this has for the current discourse of gender equality within integration policies.

2.1 Gender equality

2.1.1 History of gender equality in the Nordics

Gender equality is one of the main and most important values in today's Norwegian society and as such is understood to be a basic value for integration into Norwegian society (NOU 2011:14: 325). It is interesting to note that in the original Norwegian NOU the word used is *likestilling*, which, as described above, was

‘invented’ to distinguish class equality from other types, especially gender and ethnic equality, but that is commonly translated into English as equality. This might merely signify the nuances lost in translation or it can be interpreted as a lack of focus in the English language on the gender category, which then again indicates how specific the Scandinavian preoccupation with the issues of gender equality is. Within the *likestilling* category gender equality is mentioned as the first but not the only type of equality. Ethnicity, sexual orientation and others are mentioned as well, implying perhaps the same importance. In the short English summary⁸ of the same report gender equality creates its own separate category and is listed as the first on the list of basic Norwegian values, above all other values, including other types of equality. That could be interpreted as an effort to offer perhaps a slightly different picture of Norway in the international context than what the image directed internally is. The word *likestilling* with a specific meaning of gender equality is used in other official documents too.

However, gender equality has not always been of such importance in Norway, as the title of another government report to Stortinget suggests: *Gender equality does not come without efforts (Likestilling kommer ikke av seg selv. Meld. St. 44 (2012–2013)* – meaning people had to struggle for equality and legal measures had to be introduced to support the cause. The road to gender equality has been long and winding, utilizing a variety of means in order to advance its case.

In the Nordic countries, the first step towards institutionalised gender equality as a set of policies serving the ‘interests of women’ (Hernes in Borchorst 1998) with the goal of achieving formal equal rights was the reform of marriage legislation in the beginning of the twentieth century. This reform took place in all the Nordic countries and the all-Nordic cooperation in developing and implementing gender-related policies is considered a mark of gender relations being of utmost importance.

Family law and gender relations stand out as issues of the highest priority concerning Nordic harmonisation and cooperation (...) that clearly

⁸ The English summary is very condensed it sums up a report of more than 400 pages in only 19 pages. The name of the document is Oversettelse av sammendrag NOU Bedre integrering (Translation of summary of Norwegian official report Better integration) but even the summary itself, with its 108 pages, is longer than its translation.

demonstrates the political importance of gender issues (...). Gender relations was an area where efforts to harmonise the legal framework were distinctive, indicating that gender equality is one of the most prominent hallmarks of the Nordic model (Melby, Ravn and Wetterberg 2008: 4).

In Norway the marriage reform took place in 1909, as the first of the Nordic countries. It meant that the old (yet still quite progressive, compared to the rest of Europe) legislation that allowed wives the right to dispose of their own property and income but still maintained the husbands' right to full custody of children and complete disposal of common estate, was abolished (Wetterberg and Melby 2008: 43). The marriage reform allowed married women to dispose of their own private property and income, as well as provided them with 'housewife rights' by defining the commitment of the male bread-winner to provide the wife with money for household expenses and personal use. The reform also changed the concept of custody within marriage where both mother and father were claimed equal in terms of daily care and everyday decisions. Despite this equality the reform granted the mother's priority for the custody of small children after divorce (ibid. 44).

However, the societal processes leading to the development of gender equality legislation started already in the nineteenth century. The fact that modernisation occurred late in the Nordic countries and therefore ran parallel with industrialisation, the development of an urban middle class and other legislative reforms led to the growth of popular movements, women's movements being one of them (ibid. 5). Women's organizations introduced the claim for equality between men and women in the 1870s and 1880s, and women's citizenship was discussed in relation to legal changes concerning family and heredity (ibid.). The concept of gender equality was different in the early stages of its enforcement compared to how it is defined today.

The marriage reform of 1909 was the first step towards the institutionalisation of gender equality; when equality was claimed in the context of marriage reform it was based on an assumption of gendered division of labour in what was perceived as a 'normal' family: a male bread-winner and a female caregiver. The concept of equality grounded in the reform was then about equal worth of the work within the family and work outside (Wetterberg and Melby 2008: 44).

Women whose family status was ‘deviant’ in the eyes of the society of that time, typically unmarried women, single mothers or poor wives from the working class, could not utilize the advantages of this form of gender equality as it was expected of them to work outside the home. This kind of equality, then, based on gender difference, was inherently conditional, depending on whether or not the woman had a male provider, and thereby also depending on class (ibid.). Today, curiously, the situation is reversed for many immigrant families and especially women. Non-working immigrant women are considered ‘deviant’ from the norm and great pressure is exerted in order to have them enter the labour market (Midtbøen and Teigen 2014: 274). The bread-winner/care-giver model becomes a class indicator once again, this time indicating the disadvantaged class.

Aside from regulating the economic relationship between men and women, the marriage reform also regulated the custody of children born within marriage. The reform divided custody within marriage into two parts: daily care and economic guardianship. Mother and father were made equal by the reform in terms of daily care, but the father remained solely responsible for economic matters. Custody after divorce was changed by the reform so that mothers could be full guardians, meaning responsible for both daily care and economic matters (ibid.). Today, too, there are different forms of legislation concerning children that are supposed to promote gender equality (Korsvik 2011), with the strongest focus being on encouraging female labour market participation. This becomes relevant in the integration context too, as will be shown in the analysis part of the thesis.

As a result of the simultaneous development of the civil society and women’s movements in the Scandinavian countries and their interconnection with newly forming political forces, an idea of more equal citizenship between men and women could be developed:

The Scandinavian women’s movements were best prepared as a result of ‘feminisation from below’ since the 1930s, coalition building with the labour movement or left and liberal parties and an increase in women’s representation in decision-making bodies. This enabled them to create a more ‘woman-friendly state’ (Hernes, 1987) that laid the ground for developing more equal citizenship for men and women than in other

European welfare states, including all dimensions of citizenship rights necessary for agency and social and political participation (Lister et al. 2007: 41)

2.1.2 Gender equality as a matter of justice

I have shown in the first chapter that the Norwegian officials understand gender equality as a human right, and therefore a matter of a broader sense of justice. One of the most influential theorists of social justice, Nancy Fraser, understands justice as parity of participation (2005: 5). In a simplified and abstract view the concept of gender can be seen as an attribute distinguishing two groups⁹ that are organized hierarchically, thereby making one of them disadvantaged – suffering an injustice. What are the axes of injustice in this case? Fraser recognizes two ‘broadly conceived, analytically distinct’ kinds of injustice: socioeconomic injustice and cultural or symbolic injustice (1995: 70-71). Socioeconomic injustice is rooted in the political-economic structure of society and includes exploitation, economic marginalization, and deprivation. Cultural or symbolic injustice is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Examples of this can be cultural domination, nonrecognition, and disrespect (ibid.). The remedies for these two types of injustice are redistribution and recognition respectively. Redistribution entails “political-economic restructuring of some sort (...) [for example] redistributing income, reorganizing the division of labour, subjecting investment to democratic decision-making, or transforming other basic economic structures” (ibid. 73). Recognition involves “cultural or symbolic change [for example] revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups (...) recognizing and positively valorizing cultural diversity” (ibid.).

Where does the concept of gender fit into this distinction? Gender is a bivalent category that encompasses both political-economic and cultural dimensions. Gender therefore, implicates the need for both redistribution and recognition.

⁹ For the sake of simplicity and to follow Fraser’s model that in the case of gender equality operates with two genders only, I will refer only to male and female genders. Although recognising the expressions of gender that are placed on the continuum between male and female on either side of it (Butler 1999), I have chosen to omit this due to the nature of the data I analyse that also operate with two genders only.

On the one hand, gender structures the fundamental division between paid 'productive' labour and unpaid 'reproductive' and domestic labour, assigning women primary responsibility for the latter. On the other hand, gender also structures the division within paid labour between higher-paid, male-dominated, manufacturing and professional occupations and lower-paid, female-dominated 'pink-collar' and domestic-service occupations. (ibid. 78)

It is primarily the division between paid productive and unpaid reproductive work that the Scandinavian welfare state is preoccupied with in its quest for equality (Borchorst 2008, Korsvik 2011). The welfare state is understood to be crucial for institutionalising the conditions for participatory parity:

Welfare states distribute material benefits, to be sure, but in doing so, they also institutionalise cultural norms (...) and they construct various distinct (and often unequally valued) subject positions or identities for their claimants and beneficiaries. Thus, the welfare state is a key point of imbrication of economy and culture, redistribution and recognition. The welfare state, moreover, is crucial for gender relations. Welfare states regulate interactions between labor markets and families, which are central to the constitution of gender, and which affect both distribution and recognition. (Fraser 1996: 55)

The socio-economic dimension of injustice and its remedy, redistribution, gives rise to three models of gender equality: the breadwinner/caregiver model, the dual breadwinner model, and the dual caregiver model. I will go through the three models below.

2.1.3 Models of gender equality

The division of productive and reproductive work within the family appears to be the central dimension for theorizing gender equality (Fraser 1996). Historically, the need to regulate this division of labour and its implications for citizenship (Pateman 1988) resulted in legal changes and policies with the aim of achieving gender equality. In the Scandinavian context gender equality policies have

been introduced in connection with marriage and family law. In that particular historical context, the family law was concerned with a heterosexual family where the man was in occupational work and the woman at home taking care of the couple's children and the household (Wetterberg and Melby 2008: 43-44).

The arrangement of labour division in a heterosexual couple inspired several models of gender equality. They are based on the bread-winning/caring dichotomy, or, moving towards a more abstract understanding of the dichotomy, on sameness/difference. The 'sameness gender equality concept' claims that there are no differences between men and women and therefore both genders are equal. The 'difference gender equality concept' maintains the idea that men and women are indeed different but their differences are complementary (Nielsen 2004). Men and women complement each other and are therefore of a same value. Consequently, the gender equality concept promoting the sameness of genders favours both men and women sharing productive and reproductive work equally, while the complementary gender equality assigns productive work to men and reproductive to women, claiming the two types of labour are both of the same value (ibid.).

Based on this dichotomy theorists distinguish three basic models of gender equality: traditional bread-winner/care-giver model, where the man usually works while the woman cares for the children and the household, the dual bread-winner model where both the man and the woman work outside the home and the care of children and the elderly is delegated to the state, and lastly the dual caregiver model, where both the man and the woman share the caring duties equally. The last model is according to Fraser a utopia, an ideal that societies should be aiming for in order to achieve justice (1996).

The Norwegian model of gender equality is the 'dual bread-winner' model, or, as Fraser calls it, the 'universal bread-winner' (1996: 57). Reconciliation of work and family is a cornerstone of Norwegian gender equality policy and the main means of achieving equality is publicly arranged childcare. Day-care, the father's quota, and child allowances have the aim of increasing female participation in the labour market, even though the 'cash for care' benefit complicates the picture of the female

labour market participation as the sole aim of such policies (Korsvik 2011: 136)¹⁰. Norway became the first country in the world to introduce the so-called daddy quota in 1993 – a part of the parental leave reserved for fathers. Even with the recent focus on the father’s quota and bigger involvement of men in the caring duties, the shift towards the dual care-giver model, or ‘caregiver parity’ as Fraser calls it (1996), is not significant enough to undermine the dual bread-winner model that is inherent to the Scandinavian welfare state model (Hirdman in Borchorst 2008: 31).

Female labour market participation is considered a central aim and a basis for equality, not only on the axis of gender, but also on the axis of citizenship status and equality. Work seems to be the means through which equality is achieved, with its implications for citizenship and belonging, which is especially relevant in the context of the immigrant integration this thesis deals with. The labour market participation of Norwegian women has been quite high over the past two decades, it was 76% in 2000, compared to the countries of OECD in Europe 58% (Melby, Ravn and Wetterberg 2008: 232) and increased to 77.1% in 2013 (Indicators for gender equality in municipalities, 2013, ssb.no). However, the labour market continues to be both horizontally and vertically gender segregated, and there is still a significant pay gap (Lister 2009, Ellingsæter 2013, Earnings of all employees, 2014, ssb.no). Especially significant is a high rate of part-time employment among women: according to the latest statistics almost 40% of women work less than 30 hours per week (Employment, register-based, 2013, 4th quarter, ssb.no). Working part-time becomes a normalised form of labour market attachment for Norwegian women which is “likely to preserve women’s dominant roles as mothers and wives, thus impeding women’s abilities to compete successfully with men for powerful and lucrative occupational positions” (Ellingsæter 2013: 504).

It is not surprising, then, that the concept of work as a means of achieving equality is promoted in the integration discourse. Understanding the tendency to consider labour market participation a remedy to inequality on the basis of gender and citizenship enables us to observe the same logic in ensuring equality for

¹⁰ Cash for care is a benefit for families with small children not attending publicly funded full-time day care. It has been argued that the cash benefit “preserves the gendered division of care-giving and bread-winning” (Korsvik 2011: 136)

immigrants in Norwegian society as well as gender equality amongst the immigrants themselves.

2.2 Immigration

Norway's experience with a heterogenic society is comparatively short due to the lack of a colonial past¹¹ and subsequent immigration. The experience with diverse population is not extensive even in the Scandinavian context, with Sweden being traditionally the one country on the forefront of immigration openness (Valenta and Bunar 2010). For the purposes of this thesis I will not include the indigenous population of Sami people, even though they too once were the object of the national governments' assimilation efforts. I will focus on the recent immigrant minorities.

The period after the Second World War was characterised by a liberal approach towards immigration in Western Europe. The demand for labour needed for reconstruction after the war was substantial and provided an economic rationale for such liberalism (Brochmann 1996: 12). However, Norway first started to be a popular destination for immigrants in the late 1960s, much later than the rest of post-war Western Europe. The amount of new arrivals, mainly from countries such as Pakistan, Turkey or Morocco, that undertook manual work in industry and service sectors, was modest compared to other countries on the European continent. Even this modest influx was then stopped by new strict immigration regulations introduced in 1975 (Brochmann and Djuve 2013: 220). This move was in line with the development of immigration policies in the rest of Western Europe.

The 1975 policy was intended to stop or limit unwanted unskilled immigration from countries in the South, while at the same time securing skilled workers who were especially important for Norway as a developing oil nation at that time (Brochmann and Djuve 2013: 221). The need for limiting immigration was

¹¹ It has been a subject of debates whether the Scandinavian countries can be considered 'free of a colonial past', see Keskinen, Tuori, Irni and Mulinari (2009) *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*. For the purposes of this thesis I will not pursue this line of reasoning and will consider the Nordic countries not colonial in the sense of not having any former colonies from which immigrants would come.

framed as a means to improve integration of the already established immigrants. Integration was supposed to guarantee them equal treatment and possibilities to those of the nationals (ibid.). This policy, however, did not have the intended effect. Immigration did not cease, it just changed character. Instead of labour immigration, there was immigration on humanitarian grounds, asylum seekers, refugees and people seeking family reunification. As Brochmann and Dølvik describe it, the discourse and subsequent policies perceiving immigrants as a burden and therefore a threat to the functioning of the welfare state have turned into reality what was until then mere assumptions:

Most thinking in Western Europe since the 1970s has been based on the assumption that immigrants represent a burden on public budgets: they are consumers of welfare. The prevailing immigration policies have turned this assumption into a fact. Restrictions on labour immigration have channelled most immigrants through the humanitarian gate, thus generating burdens on the welfare system. (2006: 156)

The immigration pattern in Norway was similar to the one in the other Scandinavian countries. The labour immigration of the 1960s and 1970s changed due to the restrictive immigration policies to immigration on humanitarian grounds. Asylum seekers and refugees became the most prominent group in the 1980s and 1990s. The existence and form of the Introduction scheme in Norway is largely determined by this shift in immigration tendencies. The target group that was formed by this shift also shapes the way the issue of gender equality is addressed in the courses.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, with the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007, came another wave of labour immigration, and in the early 2000s labour immigrants from Poland constituted the largest immigrant group in Norway (Kivisto and Wahlbeck 2013: 10). According to the data from 2012, immigrants made up 11% of the overall population in Norway (Brunborg 2013), and in 2015 it was 15.6 %, out of which 12% come from Poland or are of Polish origin (Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents, 1 January 2015, ssb.no).

The immigration patterns have changed over time and the policies that were aimed at regulating the immigration have arguably produced ambivalent results or,

as Brochmann and Dølvik (2006) points out, created a new reality in a form of a self-fulfilling prophecy: the fears of the immigration straining the national budget were made into reality when, due to the changes in the immigration legislation, the asylum seekers became the most prominent immigrant group, as opposed to the work immigrants of the post-war period.

2.3 The welfare state

Given the fact that the focus of this paper lies with institutionalised gender equality, and taking the stance of Nancy Fraser claiming that the welfare state regulates the relationship between the labour market and families, I need to take a closer look at the concept of the welfare state. This concept is also crucial for understanding the influx of immigrants to Norway in the recent years as the generosity of the welfare system is one of the main ‘pull factors’ that makes a country attractive for immigration (Brochmann and Dølvik 2006: 167). In this paper I will define the so call Nordic welfare state as a specific brand of a welfare system.

At the core of the concept of the Nordic welfare state is a combination of principles of equality and personal autonomy for everyone (Rugkaasa 2010: 72). Core values are equality, justice, and solidarity. Individual rights and obligations are *grounded in citizenship and affiliation with the nation* (ibid., emphasis added). In the Norwegian context, the building of a welfare state in the post-war period, up until 1970s, was strongly connected with nation-building (Brochmann and Djuve 2013: 221). Ethnic and economic homogeneity was an important part of the complex process of building a nation and creating a welfare state:

(G)eneral homogenization (or assimilation) is usually seen as a precondition for the development of the specific Nordic brand of welfare state and possibly also for its continued support and legitimacy (Löfgren in Brochmann and Djuve 2013: 222).

Some authors argue that “an early modernisation of gender relations through gender-equality reforms was an important historical precondition for the Scandinavian welfare model” (Melby, Ravn and Wetterberg 2008: 2). Alongside

homogeneity of the ethnicity and religion as a precondition of the Nordic welfare model, a long history of social democracy is often underlined, together with Lutheranism:

(I)ncreased attention is being paid to the impact of Lutheran traditions in the emerging welfare model and the position of women in the public, welfare and religious spheres (...) Protestantism, more than social democracy, shaped universalism and the Nordic model of welfare (...) The Nordic marriage Acts, for example, were enacted in political consensus; neither social democracy nor social liberal traditions could provide an overall political explanation (Melby, Ravn and Wetterberg 2008: 4).

It is, however, worth noting that an “intrinsic part of the welfare system is also control and supervision” (Brochmand and Dølvik 2006: 168). Through provision of social rights the welfare state can control and manage marginal groups and monitor those that reside in the nation’s territory (ibid.). This tendency is well represented in the Introductory Law and its mandatory nature and influences the integration discourse, as will be shown in the analytic part of this thesis. Some elements of control and supervision can be traced in the approach of several of the interviewed street level bureaucrats, showing the ingrained-ness of the welfare state’s principles.

The concepts of solidarity and equality in the economic realm of the welfare state are expressed by economic redistribution. This has consequences for the immigration policies, in fact “integration and immigration policies have become key issues in welfare state policies” (Kivisto and Wahlbeck 2013: 9). I will set aside the external sphere of immigration policies, namely the admission control (who can enter the country) and focus on the internal sphere, namely integration.

In order to prevent an excessive burden on the welfare system, it is important that the vast majority of people residing in the territory of the state are in paid employment and pay taxes. The Nordic welfare state is characterized by the commitment to full employment of its population through an active employment policy (Rugkaasa 2010: 75). It is therefore a priority to integrate newly arrived people into the system as soon as possible (Brochmand and Dølvik 2006). Debates about sustainability of the Norwegian welfare state have become more frequent and

intense in recent years, in connection with relatively low employment rates among immigrants from non-European countries. This had led to “the imposition of a stricter labour market policy through more work-oriented measures and services” (Midtboen and Teigen 2014: 273).

Since the 1970s increased flow of immigrants into Norway, the government has employed various integration measures; however, lack of experience in the field of immigrant integration lead to an unbalanced approach where classic instruments related to ‘weak groups’, such as social assistance benefit, were applied while the cultural sphere was neglected (Brochmann and Djuve 2013: 231). The need for better integration measures had been highlighted since the 1990s and, eventually, in 2003 the new Introductory Law was passed.

The goal of the Introductory Law is to “enhance newly arrived immigrants’ possibility to participate in work and social life, as well as their economic independence” (Introductory Law 2003 §1, my translation).¹² Some authors argue that the Introductory Law was an important part of a series of changes that strengthen the focus on work (the so-called ‘work line’) within the Norwegian welfare state and that “Introduction scheme for newly arrived immigrants and refugees has been a forerunner, and perhaps a crowbar, for NAV [Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration] reform” (Djuve and Kavli 2007: 197).

2.4 Integration

I briefly touched on the subject of nation building in the paragraph about the welfare state. It is therefore appropriate to establish the link between the nation-building process and national integration.

Brochmann writes that “national integration is essential in the continuous nation-building process (...) it serves the ‘politics of identity’” (Brochmann 1996: 13). Historically, the process of integration varied in intensity, depending on the context and being the strongest in the phase of nation-forming. Today’s situation in

¹² More detailed description of the Introductory Law is in the section 2.4.2 Introductory Law, on page 29.

Europe is somewhat paradoxical, with the cross-national integration of European Union provoking renewed forces of national integration. Immigration then adds another dimension to these counteracting processes:

Immigrants are commonly seen as external individuals and groups who should (or should not) be integrated into 'fixed setting', i.e. established and rather 'completed' cultures. National identity seems (...) to be based on the ability to construct difference and specificity in relation to others: the uniqueness of 'us' compared to 'them' (Brochmann 1996: 14-15).

The concept of integration therefore works on the basis of identifying a set of values that form the national identity and requesting that these be adhered to. This necessity of clearly defined indicators of 'belonging' to the nation can be seen in the recent discourse on integration in Norway, and is of importance and interest to the topic of this thesis. The different definitions of indicators of belonging on various levels of government administration and among the street level bureaucrats will be discussed in the analysis part of the thesis.

2.4.1 Integration in the Norwegian context

Integration and equality are closely interconnected in the Norwegian government policies, as mentioned above with the example of gender equality, or as a quick word search on the government webpages regjeringen.no reveals. After the Second World War, the emerging modern-type welfare state meant that the welfare policies tried to integrate various social strata with emphasis on policies encompassing all citizens. With the labour immigration of the 1960s, and the following family reunification, the population became increasingly heterogeneous and the general welfare policies came to embrace the immigrant population and draw them into the general integration process that was aimed at promoting social cohesion and solidarity among social classes (Valenta and Bunar 2010: 468). At the same time the authorities recognized the special needs of minority groups. Starting from the 1970s, various integration policies were formulated and implemented to meet these needs, especially in the housing sector, providing a "special grant to support the city of Oslo and other communities with large immigrant populations to

build up infrastructures for integration (e.g. immigrant organizations, language courses, mother tongue education)” (ibid. 469). In the 1990s the focus shifted towards economic integration and anti-discrimination (ibid.)

Norway’s lack of immigration history made the Norwegian government look for examples of integration policies in other countries, mainly Sweden. Norway adopted central aspects of the Swedish model of integration (Brochmann and Djuve, 2013; Valenta and Bunar 2010). However, the way the model is implemented in both countries, and the integration policies of these two countries, differ. In the early years of the Norwegian integration policy efforts, the focus was placed on housing and providing areas with large immigrant populations with infrastructure needed for integration such as language courses, mother tongue education and immigrant organizations. At the end of the millennium the Norwegian integration policies focused mainly on parity between immigrants and the majority Norwegian population in terms of social and economic rights, participation, duties and opportunities. Unlike Sweden, Norway “only briefly, and never seriously, adopted the hallmark principle of freedom of choice” (Valenta and Bunar 2010: 469): whether or not the immigrants want to adopt the majority culture. This is considered a possible reason for the “stronger elements of coercion” in Norwegian introduction program and settlement policy (ibid.).

Integration became a political topic in Norway in the 1980s. The keywords in integration debates and subsequent policies of that time were tolerance, information and respect (Døving 2009: 80). The society-wide support of the ‘colourful society’ began to change at the end of the twentieth century. There could be observed a shift from the minority group focus and their right to differ, to focus on the individual as an integration agent, and ‘values’. Today’s debate centres on ‘new values’ that pose a threat to ‘Norwegian values’ (ibid. 83). These debates are, of course, part of the nation-wide discourse that shapes and influences the integration policies. The focus on values brought along the need to define them, and the definitions came to constitute what I in this thesis call the ‘approved’ understanding of gender equality in official documents.

When talking about Norwegian contemporary integration measures, Brochmann and Djuve chose to use the term assimilation instead (Brochmann and

Djuve 2013: 228). They define the term as immigrants becoming similar or more similar to the majority population over time and point out that it can be regarded as multidimensional. Assimilation can concern ends, means, and outcomes, and can be viewed as aimed at different spheres of people's lives:

Along some dimensions, the political goal of de facto assimilation is quite uncontroversial, although the term assimilation is rarely used in this sense. Policies of assimilation are considered problematic particularly in the realm of value-based preferences. Thus, the degree to which assimilation as outcome would be judged as legitimate depends on the field of policy in question and not least on the degree of 'free choice' involved for the individual (ibid.).

Brochmass and Djuve imply that economic assimilation is uncontroversial, as the main goal of integration efforts is a similar rate of labour market participation among immigrants and their self-sufficiency that is common among the majority population. On the other hand, cultural assimilation is highly debated and perceived as controversial. This thesis is concerned with the Introductory Law that primarily addresses the economic dimension of immigrant integrations. In the process of implementing the policy outlined by the law, however, the cultural dimension necessarily comes into play when the policy is interpreted by the street level bureaucrats, making it relevant to analyse its underlying meanings.

Some authors believe that the assimilative approach is not present today but was typical for the years before 1970s when there was no clearly defined policy:

It was assumed that immigrants would eventually adopt the cultural traits of the majority and, since they were already granted equality in basic rights, there was no need to develop a particular policy. This belief reflected the high degree of reliance on, and faith in, general welfare policy. But as many observers have noted (SOU 1996:55) the assimilation strategy was actually never formally adopted as the country's official policy" (Valenta and Bunar 2010: 468).

Seen in the light of the discourse shift described above, I can indeed agree with Brochmann and Djuve that today's integration measures do have more

assimilatory tendencies in the cultural sphere than the previous multiculturalist, ‘colourful society’ focused approach. On the other hand, modern integration policies can also be understood as a shift *away from* assimilation. Brochmann (2003) presents integration policies as opposite to unprompted assimilation, where immigrants become similar to the majority population spontaneously over a period of time, as described in assimilation theory by Robert Park (ibid. 362). Brochmann claims integration comes when the modern welfare state does not have time to ‘let the assimilation happen’ in its own time. Moreover, the welfare state does not have the legitimacy to press someone to become more similar to the majority ‘overnight’. Together with stress on internationally recognized human rights that guarantee the right of minorities to preserve their own culture, this represents a historical development that prompted the creation of integration policies as a “compromise between sameness and pluralism – between solidarity and freedom” (ibid. 363, my translation).

2.4.2 The Introductory Law (*Introduksjonsloven*)

The integration efforts and policies were not centrally coordinated and organized until the turn of the millennium. Individual municipalities were given responsibility over coordination and organization of the integration measures provided to immigrants settled on their territory within the law about social services that was passed in 1991. Consequently the integration efforts varied between municipalities, and immigrants could receive measures of very varying quality depending on where they were settled. Combined with a growing amount of statistical data showing the poor results from the municipal integration efforts, this helped to pave the way for a new model where the central government became involved to a larger degree than before (Djuve and Kavli 2007).

Existing integration courses and policies implemented in individual municipalities lacked an overarching structure that would organize the efforts in a unified and efficient way. The need for a unified frame of the integration policies led to the passing of a law that covers the integration of newly arrived immigrants as

that became the most pressing problem, given the nature of the immigration as discussed above.

The law that regulates integration for newly arrived immigrants and refugees is called the *Law on introduction and learning of Norwegian for newly arrived immigrants* - Introductory Law for short (Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskopplæring for nyankomne innvandrere – Introduksjonsloven). It consists of two arrangements: the right and duty to education in Norwegian language and societal knowledge, and the introduction program. Newly arrived adult immigrants who have received a residence permit (upon which a settlement permit is granted) have the right and / or obligation (based on their age and country of origin, as well as grounds for the residence permit) to participate in 250 hours of Norwegian language course and 50 hours of Norwegian societal knowledge, conducted in a language the immigrant understands, which constitute the first part of the process of integration under the law. The second arrangement, the introduction program, is focused on gaining practical knowledge that leads to immigrants' participation in the labour market or further education. In this part immigrants typically participate in an unpaid internship (*praksis plass*) that familiarizes them with Norwegian work place practices and requirements.

Both the language and societal training, as well as the internship training, must be completed within the first three years of residency in Norway. Participation in the course is a condition for obtaining a permanent residence permit (settlement permit) and the Norwegian citizenship. During the program, the participants are entitled to a fixed economic benefit. This benefit, however, is contingent on full-time participation in the program. Illegitimate absence from program activities is sanctioned with hour-by-hour benefit reductions.

The introduction scheme has to consist of at least these three parts: Norwegian language course, societal knowledge course, and measures to prepare the participants for participation in the labour market or further education. The municipalities (*kommuner*) are responsible for implementation of the scheme for the immigrants who are residents in the territory of a respective municipality (Introductory Law 2003 § 3, § 18). Aside from these three mandatory parts

municipalities offer their Introduction scheme participants various complementary courses and activities to fulfil the requirement for providing a full time program.

Different categories of immigrants have different rights and obligations. Immigrants between 16 and 55 years who have a residence permit upon which a settlement permit is granted have the right and obligation to participate in a free Norwegian language and societal knowledge course if they have been granted residence permit for the following reasons: asylum, residence on humanitarian grounds, family reunification with someone who falls into one of the two earlier mentioned groups, collective protection in a mass exodus or family reunification with Norwegian or Nordic citizen. Immigrants with the same grounds for residence permit, but older than 55 years, have the right, but not obligation, to participate in the course. Migrant workers from countries outside the EEA / EFTA area, and their family members between 16 and 55 years, are obliged to training but are not entitled to free education. Persons residing in Norway in accordance with the EEA / EFTA regulations have neither the right, nor the obligation, to participate in Norwegian language and societal course (Introductory Law 2003).

The target group for the Introduction scheme are therefore the so-called 'non-Western' immigrants and refugees. The 'West' is defined as Western Europe, North America and Oceania, while the 'non-West' includes Eastern Europe, South and Central America, Africa and Asia, including Turkey. This definition is used by Statistics Norway and used throughout the government documents on immigration (Berg and Kristiansen 2010: 240). The immigrants from non-Western countries were previously often called 'distant-culture' immigrants (*fjernkulturelle*), implying the culture in their country of origin is very different and distant from the Norwegian culture. The form of the Introduction scheme is thereby shaped by the need to explicitly define and describe the functioning of the Norwegian society; no implicit understanding is assumed. This makes it very relevant to study the content of the program and courses, as well as the people who deliver them and thereby contribute to shaping its contents.

3. Methodology

In order to capture a more complex picture of the concept of gender equality in the integration context and its changing definitions on various levels of government-organized integration activities I have decided to analyse two sets of data. Analysing official documents and interviews with people implementing the policies described in the documents provides better-balanced information on the status of perceived importance of gender equality in immigrant integration.

This chapter will describe the samples of data analysed and the methods used for the gathering of data. It will also describe the position from which I analyse the data and the influence it might have on my conclusions.

3.1 Stand-point – the starting point of the research

Before describing the methods chosen to collect and analyse data in this thesis, I would like to briefly touch the topic of my own stand-point – the position I write from - and how it reflects in my methodologic approach and findings. Within a debate on knowledge production it is always important to keep in mind who can know what, and under what circumstances (Harding 1987). For standpoint theories, all grounds for knowledge are “fully saturated with history and social life rather than abstract from it” (Harding 1993: 57) and “all knowledge attempts are socially situated” (ibid. 56). The social location of the researcher and the social and historical context of the researched topic will inevitably influence the outcome of the research.

Following the best traditions of feminist stand-point theory research, I will start with a quote from Donna Haraway where she claims that “feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges” (1991: 188). How do we know things? Haraway argues against constructivism that tends toward relativism on one hand, for having no point of view, and against empiricism on the other, for presuming an existence of a single universalist point of view. In Haraway’s understanding the subject of knowledge is always located somewhere and its perception of reality is always partial (Haraway 1988). Objectivity is achieved by having multiple viewpoints that are engaged in a dialogue with one another (ibid.) Standpoint theory then operates with this ‘situatedness’ and argues that some of the social locations are

“better than others as starting points for knowledge projects [that] challenge (...) the Western thought that takes science as its model of how to produce knowledge” (Harding 1993: 56). I would, therefore, like to ‘situate’ myself to make clear the position I am writing from, its advantages and limitations.

What shapes the position from which I write? Given the topic of this thesis, it is important to position myself within the Norwegian/non-Norwegian dichotomy, or rather spectrum or continuum.¹³ The introduction program (as does any other citizenship training throughout the Western receiving countries) works with a constructed dichotomy of the Norwegian society and its values, versus the incoming immigrants and refugees and their societies and values. The values of the cultures the immigrants come from are assumed to be significantly different from (or even incompatible with) the Norwegian values, thus creating the need for specific immigrant education on the Norwegian values. Anne Phillips puts it succinctly in her comment on integration:

“talk of integration or cohesion conjures up a preexisting set of values that distinguishes each host society, and urges people from minority cultural groups to adapt themselves more actively to this. The standard justification for citizenship training is the importance of familiarising new migrants with the core principles of democracy, toleration, and equality. There is a clear enough implication that such principles will not be familiar to the new migrants.” (Phillips 2007: 22)

Since I am an immigrant myself, and not from a Western country, I should be counted as a non-Norwegian in need of being educated on values important in Norway. I can claim my position to be one on the margin that Sandra Harding recommends as a starting point for feminist research (1987). However, having the privilege of coming from an EU country, even though it is one of its newest

¹³ This thesis operates with the concept of integration into a nation and the values that constitute the national identity. The Norwegian/non-Norwegian value dichotomy is a part of both popular as well as official discourse (Døving 2009) and thus contributes to shaping of the public policies. Placing myself in either of the groups will, to an extent, determine the way I analyse the policies. At the same time I would like to stress that I am aware of heterogeneity of both ‘Norwegian’ and ‘immigrant’ groups. Using simplifying terms as ‘immigrants’ and ‘Norwegians’ poses a distinct risk of essentialising these groups but the limited scope of this thesis does not allow for a detailed debate on this topic.

members and therefore not fully accepted as part of the ‘West’, I am considered knowledgeable enough about Norwegian society that I do not have the right and/or obligation to participate in the government funded integration scheme. I can neither therefore lump myself in with the group targeted by the Norwegian integration scheme, nor can I fully stand on the ‘Norwegian side’, even though my position as a researcher within a Norwegian institution might somehow strengthen the ‘Norwegian’ position through the institutionalised cultural capital that the degree from a Norwegian university represents (Bourdieu 1986).¹⁴

This in-between position has both advantages and disadvantages for my research. In my position I can, to an extent, avoid the “conversation of us with us about them” (Sprague and Kobrynowicz 2004: 33) but neither can I claim the insider position on either side (the Norwegian host society or the immigrant target group of the Introduction scheme). Without a doubt this might lead to a partial loss of information, especially given the fact that my knowledge of the Norwegian language is mostly limited to understanding within the area of my expertise (social sciences) but the active production of language is still a challenge. While I can claim the outsider position that looks at realities with eyes that lack the bias of both sides (while bringing in a different form of bias, nevertheless), I can at the same time therefore miss some commonly shared meanings, intentions and connotations that are inherent in the analysed texts and situations. I believe that in spite of drawbacks that this in-between position carries, I can still contribute with insightful knowledge and analysis.

My ‘in-between’ position has also been influenced by the ‘invisibility of difference’ (Berg and Kristiansen 2010): the fact that visually it is not obvious that I am an immigrant in Norway. In the contemporary context immigrants are marked by their different and ‘distant’ culture. Both ‘difference’ and ‘culture’ can be seen as coded manifestations of race trying to circumvent accusations of racism (Solomos and Back in Berg and Kristiansen 2010: 232). Since race is a marker of visible difference, the lack of such a marker makes me ‘non-different’. If the identities and

¹⁴ Apart from my immigrant status and background there are other aspects that influence the position I write from and, to an extent the data I gather as these aspects have an influence on how I am perceived by the informants I interviewed. These aspects are gender, age, language knowledge, education etc. While they are all relevant in a research, I consider my immigrant status the most important aspect influencing my interpretation of the data I gathered.

realities of people are influenced by the way they are perceived by others (Alcoff in Berg and Kristiansen 2010: 226), I am perceived as not different, but also not the same, due to the language barrier. This further contributes to my blurry in-between stand point.

I would also like to point out that the process of research influenced me and my sense of position and identity on the majority/minority field (Naples 2003). At the start of the research I had not yet felt my values conflict with Norwegian values. However, after analysing the official documents and a textbook used in the societal knowledge course, I came to realize that there are, indeed, significant points of conflict. What I like to think of as personal traits, rather than culturally determined ones, are being challenged by the values espoused by the system, making me realize that the integration efforts might be perceived as invading individuals' private life in a manner that is hard to accept or logically justify. The stress on organized mass activities, local community involvement and other social events that can serve as an illustration of the importance of solidarity, community and cohesion in the Norwegian society, can be difficult to accept for people who prefer a more solitary and less organized way of living.

The experience of society's expectations clashing with my own preferences significantly influenced my interpretation of the study material and made me more sensitive to seemingly less important elements of the integration complexity.

3.1.1 Challenges and limitations of the stand point

The most obvious limitation of this research is the language barrier, as already mentioned. This has implications for both theoretical and analytical part of this research. In the theoretical part I mostly draw from books and journals in English. Even though these are written by Scandinavian researchers who are 'insiders' on the topic and knowledgeable about wider contexts, I assume these texts are still written in a way that non-Scandinavians would understand, and part of the information might get lost in translation. The same applies for translations of summaries of White papers and Official Norwegian Reports. Conversely, the added

value of working with English texts can be the ability to see how ‘Norway’ is, or wants to be, perceived in countries outside of Scandinavia.

My limited knowledge of the Norwegian language might also cause some loss of information and meaning while reading official documents in Norwegian, conversely, the same loss of meaning and information might have occurred during the interviews that were conducted in English. Given the topic of the thesis and my own preference of seeing integration as a two way process where majority and minority influence each other, I choose to view this as an example of a multicultural integration process in the Modood’s understanding of the concept (2013).

I look at this thesis as a part of my own integration into Norwegian society and a contribution to the common goal of shared welfare, equality, and solidarity.

3.2 Document analysis

This thesis consists of analysis of two types of material. The first part is a discourse analysis of official documents dealing with integration and the Introduction scheme. In this part I will employ Carol Bacchi’s approach to policy analysis with the main question of ‘what is the problem presented to be?’ (2010). I will be looking for problematisation of the concept of gender equality, both explicit and implicit. What is the problem with gender equality when it comes to immigrants in Norway? What prevents it from being achieved and what can be done to achieve it? The second part is an analysis of expert interviews, conducted with people who work in the Introduction scheme, or in other government-sponsored integration courses whose target group are the same people who attend the Introduction program. The Introduction scheme runs as a red thread through all my data as it is what I call the flagship of Norwegian integration efforts.¹⁵ In spite of being

¹⁵ The Introduction program and courses are the first specific and organized effort on the field of immigrant integration. Before the Introductory Law came into force in 2004 the field of integration was regulated within the social service law from 1991 and before that there was a social care law from 1964 (Djuve and Kavli 2007: 207). The passing of the Introductory Law required a reorganization of the structure that deals with immigrant integration and special departments for refugee services were established (ibid. 209).

considered the most structured of these efforts, it is still quite flexible and allows for a manifold of approaches and resources used, and thereby variety in the pool of information which I draw my analysis sample from.

The analysis of official documents aims to shed light on the ‘approved’ definition of gender equality in the context of immigrant integration; the word approved is used here in the normative sense of the ‘correct’ definition approved by the Norwegian government. By employing Bacchi’s discourse analysis, I will show how this definition is constructed and problematised. Government policies and the work that precedes them or provides sources for them generally react to some problem or issue in society. However, as rightly noted by Berg and Kristiansen, these issues, problems or topics do not just lie there and wait to be discovered, but are instead formulated and ‘created’ by something or someone (2010: 236). The construction of gender equality within the immigration and integration discourse is quite specific, employing the techniques of ‘othering’ (Diez 2004), and, in popular discourse as well as in academic debate, the general tendency is to slip towards the comparative miss that Gressgård and Jacobsen mention, comparing the ‘Western’ ideal to ‘non-Western’ reality. The document analysis shows what model of gender equality is set up as desirable to be adopted by immigrants and whether any signs of tendencies towards the comparative miss are present. There are indicators that point towards elements of the three gender equality models mentioned by Fraser (1996), as well as representations of problems and obstacles on the way to gender equality among the immigrant population in Norway.

Bacchi’s method of discourse analysis includes asking a set of questions with the aim of uncovering “presuppositions and assumptions which often go unanalysed” (Bacchi 1999: 12). Given the size of the sample to analyse and the limited scope of this thesis, I chose to apply only two of them: ‘what is the problem represented to be?’ and ‘what presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation?’

3.2.1 Sample for document analysis

The analysis of official documents about integration aims to cover documents on several levels of government-organized integration activities. With a focus on the Introduction program and accompanying language and societal courses, and starting on the highest level, the first document to be analysed is the Introductory Law (*Introduksjonsloven*). The law was passed in 2003, and for a year it was voluntary for the municipalities to adopt it. After a year it became mandatory (Berg and Kristiansen 2010: 238). It specifies the target group for the mandatory introduction course and lists the rights and obligations of its participants. The passing of the law marks the beginning of organized and structured integration policies on the government level, the difference from previous policies being especially the obligatory nature of the Introduction scheme and its ties to welfare benefits.

The passing and coming into effect of the Introductory Law also serves as a dividing point for my choice of other documents for analysis. Subsequent documents have to fulfil the following criteria that I have set: they have to be created after 2004, listed under the Ministry of children, equality and inclusion as the department that is responsible for integration agenda, relate to the topic of integration, and be defined as either an Official Norwegian Report or a White Paper. Both Official Norwegian Reports and White Papers are initiatives of the government: in the Official Norwegian reports the government presents findings and conclusions of a committee or a working group that was specially constituted by the government or a ministry to report on different aspects of society (Official Norwegian Reports, regjeringen.no). The White Papers are

drawn up when the Government wishes to present matters to the Storting (Parliament) that do not require a decision. White papers tend to be in the form of a report to the Storting on the work carried out in a particular field and future policy. These documents, and the subsequent discussion of them in the Storting, often form the basis of a draft resolution or bill at a later stage (White papers, regjeringen.no, emphasis added).

After these criteria were applied, I chose two documents to analyse: the White paper from 2012-2013 '*A comprehensive integration policy*' (Meld. St. 6 (2012-2013) En helhetlig integreringspolitikk) and an Official Norwegian Report from 2011 called '*Better integration – goals, strategies, measures*' (NOU 2011: 14 Bedre integrering — Mål, strategier, tiltak). For both of these documents there exist short English summaries that I analyse in addition to the original Norwegian text.

The selection of documents dealing with integration and Introduction scheme on a non-government level is based on expert interviews that are analysed in the second part of this thesis. Informants were asked for documents that they use for their work with refugees and immigrants, especially any guidelines or instructions on how to conduct a course about societal knowledge (*samfunnskunnskap*). This proved to be slightly challenging as many informants admitted they do not use any official document other than the Introductory Law itself. Some explained that they design course content themselves; others arrange courses that are certified by Bufetat (Child, Youth and Family Directorate) that are not designed specifically for immigrants but for the population as a whole. Due to the very flexible nature of the Introduction scheme, some municipalities (*kommuner*) conduct the societal knowledge courses themselves; others (including Oslo) outsource this to companies specializing in adult education. The most prominent and most popular one is called VOX – Voksenopplæring.

VOX is the national agency for lifelong learning under the Ministry of education. Its main task is to increase the participation of adults in social and work life by raising the level of their skills (*On Vox*, vox.no). Even though not all municipalities and counties use the services of VOX for their integration courses, VOX seem to be responsible for the methodology and content of both the Norwegian language courses and societal knowledge courses. When browsing through the website of the Integration and diversity directorate (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet – IMDi) under the section of Introduction program, VOX is listed as responsible for methodological guidelines for Norwegian language and society knowledge courses, as well as printed and online resources for these courses and the Norwegian language exam (Opplæring i norsk og samfunnskunnskap 2011, imdi.no).

After the Introductory Law came into full force in 2005, VOX designed a course and guidelines to the course of 50 hours of societal knowledge (50 timer samfunnskunnskap). This 50-hour course is mandatory for all Introduction course participants and it is taught in a language the participants understand. I have obtained a paper brochure of methodological guidance that was issued after the Introductory Law came into force, as well as workbook for the 50 hour course in English. After talking to the informants, I have decided not to include the brochure on methodological guidance in the analysis, as those I have spoken to do not use the brochure. The workbook, on the other hand, is being used in the courses and will therefore be analysed.

3.2.2 Method for document analysis

As previously mentioned, the method used to analyse the documents is Carol Bacchi's problem-based approach to discourse analysis. Bacchi proposes a different take on studying policies, arguing for a shift from focusing on 'solutions' to focusing on 'problems', as objects or targets of policies do not exist independently of the way they are represented, and any description of an issue necessarily contains interpretations and hence representation of 'problems' (1999: 1-2). Bacchi suggests using this approach to "debates surrounding policy issues in public venues such as parliaments or the media [or] policy documents such as committee reports, and to policy proposals in the shape of legislative or judicial decrees" (ibid. 4).¹⁶ The main question Bacchi asks then is 'what is the problem represented to be?' She suggests a set of additional five questions "which could be used to initiate a What's the Problem? approach of any selected issue" (ibid. 12).¹⁷ Bacchi calls her approach

¹⁶ In the Norwegian context, a similar analysis was conducted by Berg and Kristiansen (2010). In their discourse analysis of preparatory documents for the Introductory Law Berg and Kristiansen focus on expressions and problematisations of 'visible difference' of ethnicity and gender. Even though the field of interest of my thesis is similar, I want to focus on representations of gender equality as a core Norwegian value.

¹⁷ The full set of questions is: • What is the problem represented to be either in a specific policy debate or in a specific policy proposal?
• What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation?
• What effects are produced by this representation? How are subjects constituted within it? What is likely to change? What is likely to stay the same? Who is likely to benefit from this representation?
• What is left unproblematic in this representation?

‘commonsensical,’ pointing out that it is understandable that the way people perceive things will influence what they think should be done about it, but that people are not encouraged to think that way about political issues:

(T)he guiding premise of a What's the Problem? approach, is that every policy proposal contains within it an explicit or implicit diagnosis of the 'problem', which I call its problem representation. A necessary part of policy analysis hence includes identification and assessment of problem representations, the ways in which 'problems' get represented in policy proposals (...) those affecting and initiating policy have assumptions and values, (..) these will have effects on the way the people concerned describe or give shape to a particular political issue. (ibid. 1)

The ‘what is the problem represented to be?’ approach is a form of a discourse analysis as it operates with language, concepts, and categories. The ‘problems’ thereby become ‘problematizations’. By using the word ‘problematization’, Bacchi hints at social construction of such phenomena and tries to make the process of meaning construction visible to the readers. Problematization can be understood as a form of ‘framing’ as described by Erving Goffman (1974).

Unlike Bacchi, Goffman bases his concept of framing on the assumption that objects in the world can exist independently of the way they are being referred to, and thereby distinguishes two analytical categories: the empirical part called ‘the strip’ which is any part of ongoing activity, and ‘the frame’ defined as “principles of organization which govern events, at least social ones, and our subjective involvement in them” (ibid. 10-11). People then ‘frame’ ‘strips’ of activity by seeing them as natural (unguided events) or social (guided doings). I can argue that Bacchi’s concept of problematization aims to distinguish between the two types of framing and unveil the process which makes ‘doings’ look like ‘events’. Goffman’s frame analysis can also be understood as a different method of discourse analysis that can be used to analyse both policies, and people’s understanding of situations and activities, making it relevant for both parts of my thesis.

• How would ‘responses’ differ if the ‘problem’ were thought about or represented differently? (Bacchi 1999: 12)

Policies can be viewed as a form of legitimation that “justifies the institutional order by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives” (Berger and Luckmann 1996: 111). Legitimation “not only tells the individual why he should perform one action and not another; it also tells him why things are what they are. In other words, 'knowledge' precedes 'values'” (ibid.). Since policies contain a strong normative aspect, and their aim is to regulate human behaviour, it is crucial to keep in mind that not only is reality socially defined, but the definitions are always embodied: “concrete individuals and groups of individuals serve as definers of reality” (ibid. 132) and with a division of labour in society there emerges a full-time personnel for ‘universe-maintaining legitimation’ (ibid.). The result is an institutionalised pattern of knowledge, in other words a discourse, and the analysis of discourse is the aim of this thesis.

By pointing at concrete people creating social policies and their interpretations of social issues, it might be easier to realize that the issues and problems indeed are being created by the discourse they are a part of. By employing Bacchi’s methodology on problem representation, I do not imply that the problem does not exist in reality (in this case gender equality or the lack thereof in the immigrant communities in Norway), the focus of interest here is rather the relationship between gender equality in the context of immigrant integration and the government and how it became a problem for the government to address (Bletsas 2012: 40).

Bacchi stresses that when doing the ‘what is the problem?’ discourse analysis, it is absolutely necessary not only to identify different interpretations of issues but to evaluate them, mainly on the basis of their supposed effects. I will, however, for the purposes of this thesis, refrain from explicit evaluation, since I believe I do not have enough data to presuppose the effects of the documents I analyse and an attempt to guess the effects would be just another value-laden assumption. My contact with the field of the policy implementation, in this case the teachers and case workers involved with Introduction scheme participants, has not been extensive enough to be able to draw conclusions about the way the policy documents are interpreted and used, if at all. I can only assume that the documents contribute to overall discourse on immigration and gender equality but at this level

of analysis it is difficult to assess to what extent this influences the reality of street level bureaucrats and their clients.

3.3 Interview analysis

In the second part of the thesis I will analyse interviews I conducted with people who can be perceived as ‘representatives of Norway’ towards the newly arrived immigrants and refugees. With one exception they all work with Introduction course participants, either as case workers or as teachers. The one exception is a person who leads a course for immigrant women who have been in a Norway for an unspecified amount of time but are not considered ‘integrated’ as most of them are stay-at-home mothers and home makers; they cannot speak Norwegian and have limited knowledge of the Norwegian society, therefore the course has a lot in common with the Introduction course and formally uses the same guidelines that are applied to teaching Norwegian and societal knowledge courses.

3.3.1 Sample for interview analysis

The most important criterion for selection of interviewees is their connections to the Introduction course. Given the flexible nature of the course, the interviewees’ role in the integration process and courses vary; however, they all are either a direct part of the Introduction scheme or are a part of a contractor company hired to perform a task within the program, or are part of a different structure just following the same guidelines and principles as direct participants or contractors.

The sampling method can be described as snowball sampling: “Snowball sampling uses a small pool of initial informants to nominate other participants who meet the eligibility criteria for a study” (Morgan 2008: 815). From several initial points of contact with the community of Introduction scheme workers I have been able to establish contact with more interviewees through their common network. It has, however, proved to be extremely difficult to penetrate the field of government related integration efforts without a backing of an existing network or a possibility

for reciprocal favour. Street level bureaucrats are very pressed for time and as a student I had relatively little to offer them in return (in terms of networking possibilities, future collaboration etc.) for their spending time with me. Any attempts at gaining informants through unsolicited emails and/or phone calls were met with rejection or a non-response. The snowball method, then, proved to be a necessity rather than a method of choice.

The difficulties I encountered in finding informants for the thesis might, to an extent, stem from the fact that I reached out to possible interviewees in English, even though I offered the option of answering in Norwegian. The language barrier will keep appearing throughout the paper as a possible contortion factor. Another possible cause for the difficulties I have encountered might be the fact that the topic of integration and gender equality is a sensitive one: some of the reluctance of those I approached might stem from a concern related to how their experiences and sentiments might be portrayed.¹⁸

The method of snowball sampling is prone to producing biased results because the group of potential participants is interconnected. It “poses a distinct risk of capturing a biased subset of the total population of potential participants because any eligible participants who are not linked to the original set of informants will not be accessible for inclusion in the study” (Morgan 2008: 816). I have, however, somewhat lessened the risk of bias by having several points of entry to the field, so that not all the interviewees are linked together.

Even though the snowball method does not allow an intentional selection of a diverse sample, the group of interviewees I talked to provides a measure of diversity in the categories of age, gender, marital status, and ethnicity. This adds to a more varied and complex picture and could show different perspectives on the debated topics. I will discuss further in the analysis how some of these categories influenced the interviewees’ approach to their job and the topic we discussed.

¹⁸ It is slightly paradoxical that in a country where the discourse on gender equality is so prominent and seemingly uncontroversial in many ways (for a more detailed debate on this point see section 4.3) it proved to be difficult to find respondents in the field of integration to talk about the topic. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate this further, but I note it for further interest.

3.3.2 Method for interview analysis

I will analyse the data obtained from the interviews using a variety of techniques. As Steinar Kvale points out in his comprehensive overview of interview-related issues, the method most commonly used for interview analysis is ad-hoc meaning generation (1996: 203). This includes a set of techniques that are used as considered appropriate by the researcher throughout the interview analysis and interpretation. These include noting patterns and themes, seeing plausibility, clustering, making metaphors, counting, making contrasts or comparisons, and making conceptual and theoretical coherence (ibid. 204).

I will utilize various techniques in the interview analysis as listed above, with a focus on finding links between results of document analysis and the contents of the interviews. I will also apply the principles and questions of discourse analysis suggested by Bacchi (what is the problem represented to be?) in the textual analysis part of the thesis. I will look for topics that appear both in the documents and in the interviews, and compare the problematisations of these topics. Even though the interviews cannot be treated as policies, it is still a valid approach to look for problematisation of the main concepts, given the authority and influence of case workers and teachers over the immigrants and refugees, and taking into account what they represent towards these. Following Lipsky's line of argumentation, the so-called street level bureaucrats, such as case workers and teachers, are in many ways the real policy makers. The actions and unsanctioned coping mechanisms of the street level bureaucrats tend to bias the policy content. Their discretionary powers enable them to shape public policy on the spot. The actions of the street level bureaucrats then ultimately add up to agency policy and effectively become the public policies they carry out (2010: 13). It is not always the laws, but often rather the daily decisions of street-level bureaucrats that become public policy.

I will also apply elements of frame analysis (Goffman 1974). Goffman's frame analysis is a method that analyses how people understand situations and activities. I will focus on the distinction between 'social' doings and 'natural' events, as mentioned in the document analysis method section, in the interviewees' interpretation of their work, especially with regards to the core Norwegian values.

4. Document analysis

I am going to look at five documents in this section. They are the *Introductory Law, Law guidelines /Rundskriv Q-20/2015*, Official Norwegian Report NOU 2011: 14 *Better integration – Goals, strategies and approaches*, White Paper/ Meld. St. 6 (2012-2013) *A comprehensive integration policy*, finally: *Intro - workbook for 50 hours of societal knowledge in English*. All these documents are in Norwegian, except for the workbook which is in English.

Given the focus on the thesis, I will show in what context certain keywords appear. These include equality/equity/equal worth (*likhet/likeverd*), gender equality (*likestilling/kjønnslikestilling*), men (*menn*), women (*kvinner*), gender (*kjønn*), child (*barn*). I will look at each document separately and then try to identify patterns and themes that appear in two or more. Analysing the context in which these keywords appear will hint at the preferred definitions and understanding of the concept of gender equality and the means of achieving it, as well as possible subversive reading and potential problematisations.

4.1 Introductory Law – Introduksjonsloven

The history and purpose of the Introductory Law has been described in the section 2.4.2, therefore I will proceed directly to the analysis.

When searching for the chosen keywords in the electronic version of the law on the official law page lovdata.no, the words equality, gender, and women do not come up at all. The word men/man comes up only as a job title of a local authority institution that has decisive powers in disputes and complaints on fulfilling the right and duties based in the law (*fylkesmannen* – the county governor).

The word child is mentioned in two instances but none of them is related to parenting and subsequently then to the issue of gender equality. On one occasion, the context is the financial benefit system, including child benefit, and its rules in connection with the benefit course participants receive for attending the classes on regular basis (§ 12). The other mentioning of the keyword child is in a paragraph about case workers' reporting duty to the child social service institution

(*barnevernet*) in case of suspected abuse or neglect (§ 26). The fact that children are mentioned in connection with state institutions rather than family could be problematised on a level of child upbringing, cultural differences and assumptions, and other immigration related levels; however, for the purposes of this thesis with its focus on gender equality this problematisation will not be pursued further.

The absence of any gender equality related keywords could be interpreted in several ways. Perhaps the most obvious one would be to claim that the absence of any gender equality- (or just gender-) related content shows the gender neutrality of the law. The fact that there is no mention of the gender of the members of the group the law is intended for could mean the target groups are perceived as individuals that are gender-less, enhancing the idea of sameness of men and women. This brings us to the classic dilemma that Carol Pateman calls the ‘Wollstonecraft dilemma’. Pateman points out that women have demanded a gender-neutral social world on the one hand, while on the other hand insisting on recognition of the special capacities, talents, needs, and concerns they have *as women*: “(E)ither women become (like) men, and so full citizens; or they continue at women’s work, which is of no value for citizenship (...) within a patriarchal welfare state neither demand can be met” (1988: 252). Even though Pateman relates the dilemma to the issue of citizenship and how to achieve this, I can simplify it and apply it to other topics such as functioning of a welfare state, since the question of ‘sameness or difference’ lies at its core.

Norwegian understandings of citizenship in the welfare state are close to the gender-neutral social world where the ‘male’ is the norm with the universal breadwinner being the desired model (Hirdman in Borchorst 2008). In fact, the very understanding of the Scandinavian model of the welfare state presupposes understanding the ‘male’ norm as universal while traditionally ‘female’ tasks such as caring are delegated to the state (Korsvik 2011, Borchorst 2008). The absence of gender in the Introductory Law therefore does not necessarily mean that the law is gender neutral; it can rather be interpreted as reflecting the norms of a specific Scandinavian and Norwegian brand of welfare state, which centres on the ‘male’ norm. This is expressed in the law by the stated purpose of the Introduction program, which is for immigrants to find a paid job (or continue education, which eventually will also result in finding a paid job). Even though, as will be shown in the analyses of the other integration-related documents, work is understood as means of

achieving gender equality, in the law itself work is not mentioned in this capacity at all. In the second part of the thesis I will examine whether the seemingly gender neutral law also has gender neutral effects for its target group, as seen by people who work with the law.

We can also look at the apparent gender neutrality of the Introductory Law through the lenses of Fraser's redistribution and recognition theory (1995). The modern welfare state is, according to Fraser, a typical example of redistributive efforts, or as she calls it "affirmative remedies", that aim to redress economic injustice (ibid. 84). She also claims that redistribution and recognition are often mutually exclusive. It follows that if the welfare state aims to redress the economic injustice, it strengthens the cultural or symbolic injustice. One of the dimensions of misrecognition is "nonrecognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture)" (ibid. 71); the absence of the gender aspect might then be seen as perpetuating the symbolic injustice towards women.

4.2 Circulaire (law guidelines) – Rundskriv Q-20/2015

The circulaire is a document issued together with a law that is supposed to serve as a reference work and help for those who need to work with and interpret the law. This document is updated as needed to capture changes and updates in the law. The latest version of the circulaire for the Introductory Law was issued in January 2015. It is defined as

“an aid to municipalities in their efforts to implement the schemes in the Introductory Law. The circulaire is primarily a collection of regulations relating to the Introductory Law, and is designed as a reference work. The circulaire contains supplementary notes to legislative and regulatory provisions” (Rundskriv Q-20/2015: 8).

It offers explanation how the law should be “understood and practised” (ibid.). I will discuss whether the circulaire for the Introductory Law deals with gender equality related topics in any way.

The search in the document for equity and equal worth did not result in anything of an interest. The search for gender equality (*likestilling*) showed that the word was used in a paragraph about income, specifically § 11.1 Other income beside introduction benefit. The circulaire explains that it is necessary to adopt a gender equal perspective and ensure that everybody has financial independence:

“Unlike social benefits the introduction benefit is not a household based benefit. It does not affect a family member who receives the introduction benefit if other members also receive it, or have some other form of income or benefits. The goal is for the introduction scheme to protect the (gender) equality perspective and give participants the opportunity to support themselves irrespective of the income of others in the household” (Rundskriv Q-20/2015: 40-41, my translation)

The word used in the Norwegian text is *likestilling*, which in most contexts means gender equality, as explained in the section 2.1.1. It can, however, at the same time still point towards more general understanding of equality. Since the word is used in a context of a household, the most likely interpretation is that it concerns spouses, as they are usually the source of income of the household.

What is the problem represented to be in this paragraph? The preferred reading, in the context of the Scandinavian welfare state’s focus on individuality (Rugkaasa 2010), seems to promote empowerment and independence of an individual. The motivation behind introducing an individual activity based benefit is in line with welfare state’s promotion of full employment and was meant to simulate the functioning of paid employment. The immigrants who qualify for participation in the Introduction scheme have to make active efforts – attending the courses and activities – and are given ‘a salary’ for participation. This solution balances out the need for solidarity, expressed by the left wing of the political spectrum, with the requirement to prevent abusing of the social system, promoted by the right side of the political spectrum (Djuve and Kavli 2007: 214). By providing individual source of income to every (adult) member of the household, the Introduction scheme can be understood to emulate a typical double income Norwegian family.

In an alternative reading the text assumes inequality that the Introduction scheme is supposed to tackle. The paragraph paints a situation of a ‘typical’

immigrant household that has one income only.¹⁹ Since the concept of gender equality, that is mentioned in the cited paragraph, in the Norwegian context mostly signifies issues of women's rights, I might interpret this as single income household where the provider is male. The goal then is to achieve gender equality in the Norwegian sense of the word, here portrayed as being a financially independent individual, stressing the importance for women of having an independent source of income. According to 'what is the problem presented to be?' approach, the problem, then, is that immigrant women are not equal as long as they do not have their own income. In the phase of attending the introduction course the income is provided by the local authority, preparing the women for transition to the labour market where the source of the income will be the employer.

The necessity of an own income, and subsequently for a job for women, is of an utmost importance in the quest for equality as a main Norwegian value, even though research shows this is at times not perceived as a desirable state by the immigrant women themselves (Nyhagen Predelli 2004). Certain groups of immigrant women feel that by engaging in a paid job outside of home they are losing the dominance they had in the private sphere, which is perceived as a primary source of power they have within the family. Entering the labour market then subsequently leads to a perceived power imbalance between the spouses rather than equality (ibid.).

Apart from what I have shown so far, the circulaire avoids any mention of gender, gender equality, men and women. None of these words are mentioned in the document in any relevant context. The last of the chosen keywords, the word child or children, is used throughout the text frequently, mostly in relation to child benefits and the rules of paying out the introduction scheme benefit. Only in one case could I detect a gender equality related context, or more precisely work life balance context:

[The Norwegian language and societal knowledge] education must be adapted to individual circumstances and organized in such a way that it is

¹⁹ In practise, at this stage the newly arrived immigrants' households usually have no income at all, apart from the Introduction scheme benefit. What this interpretation is meant to point out is an image of an immigrant family already settled that does not differentiate based on the length of stay in the country.

possible to attend the classes both for people with caring responsibilities for young children and for people who work” (Rundskriv Q-20/2015: 64, my translation)

The wording of the paragraph hints at two different groups of people, even though it avoids explicitly naming the gender of the groups with different responsibilities. The problematisation of this situation is slightly more subtle but it is there. Returning to Wollstonecraft’s dilemma, the paragraph can be interpreted as an attempt to accommodate gender differences. So behind the individuality and equality discourse (“everybody should have the same possibility to attend the classes...”) there is the distinction between the obstacles that different groups (genders) might face (“...be it mothers with small children or men in work”).

4.3 Official Norwegian Report “Better Integration: Goals, Strategies, and Approaches”

Since an Official Norwegian Report (NOU) is a document written by a committee (in this case a committee appointed by the Norwegian government or a ministry - the Committee hereafter) and not a single author, it is important to remember that “several problem representations may lodge within a single document, causing tensions and contradictions” (Bacchi 1999: 4). The Official Norwegian Report 2011:14 was written upon the request of the Ministry for Children, Equality and Integration and was to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation in the field of immigrant integration, as well as propose measures and solutions to be taken by the government. The measures proposed by the report (and NOUs in general), however, are not binding and the government might choose not to adopt them.

The Committee that consists of local authority workers, researchers and academics, and people in leading positions in public and private sector institutions relevant to the topic, had a task and mandate to “stress challenges and opportunities...suggest measures in inclusion and integration policies” (NOU 2011:14: 11). The mandate of the Committee was extensive and the Committee focused on a range of topics, mainly “employment, education, participation in

democracy and civil society, and living conditions in general” (ibid.). The Committee explicitly points out that different perspectives were employed throughout the document, women and gender equality being one of them.

The report describes a current status quo in the field of integration in multicultural Norway, as well as proposes measures and solutions. Given the position of the documents as a possible and probable base of future policies, its influence can be interpreted as acting as a normative tool. Approved by the ministry and the government by the mandate given to the Committee, it represents the priorities of the government by the topic selected, and the stance of selected representatives of academia by the conclusions and recommendations presented in the report.

The information presented in the report are based on meetings that the Committee arranged with members of the public across the country, where people were encouraged to describe their experiences and opinions on matters of inclusion and integration. Other sources of information were meetings with integration experts from four Nordic countries, debates in social media, and input from the reference group KIM (Contact Committee for Immigrants and the Authorities) as well as literature on the topics.

When I started analysing the report, I had already finished interviewing people for the second part of the thesis. It sharpened my focus and made me notice and compare the problematisation of gender equality-related topics in the document and in the interviews. This NOU, unlike the Introductory Law and its circulaire, contains references to societal values and norms. The concept of gender equality and its aspects are problematised within the integration discourse, and the NOU provides a much more fruitful material for analysis and for a comparison of the interplay between the higher levels of bureaucratic apparatus and the street level bureaucrats (Lipsky 2010) like case workers, teachers etc. In the analysis I will therefore point out some significant areas of difference (or similarity) between my findings from the interviews and the document analysis. These will be described and analysed in more detail in further sections of this thesis.

The same method, searching for the keywords equality, gender equality, men, women, and children, was applied. Given the much wider scope of hits, only

the ones that appeared in a relevant, gender equality-related context were taken into consideration for the analysis.

What is the problem represented to be, when it comes to gender equality in the context of integration in this NOU? Equality between the sexes seems to be of importance, as pointed out above where the women's perspective of the report is stressed. Looking at the table of contents of the document, women or gender are dealt with in separate sections on a number of occasions. "Immigrant women's situation" is a part of chapter on living standards, "Gender roles" is a subheading in the chapter on work and employment, in the same chapter there is a part called "Women with immigrant background".

In spite of the definition of gender equality in the Gender Equality Law from 1978, where equality is defined as equal opportunity for education, work, and cultural and professional development, the Committee stresses throughout the document that equality is not only about equal opportunities but also about equal outcomes. However, there is no clear definition of what gender equality means, even though it is presented as one of the core values of the Norwegian society that is both 'specific' to Norway and universal as it is rooted in basic human rights.

The common values that form the basis of our multicultural society must be rooted in the universal human rights, including the right to life, liberty and the rule of law. Important values of Norwegian society must be equality, gender equality, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, solidarity, economic and social equality, scientific way of thinking, tolerance and participation in democracy and civil society. (NOU: 2011: 14: 349, my translation)

When it comes to public discourse about immigration and integration, the members of public seem to emphasize the importance of gender equality. According to the research the Integration Barometer, conducted in 2010, there are five values that at least 90 percent of respondents consider characteristic for the Norwegian society: freedom of speech, democracy and constitution, gender equality, and freedom of religion. Gender equality is the value that most of the population agrees on (NOU: 2011: 14: 313). At the same time, non-compliance with this basic value is presented as a one of the reasons for tougher and more strict immigration policies and integration measures: "the reaction of the majority population to women-

oppressive cultural practices in certain immigrant communities has been an important catalyst in such debates [about stricter immigration and integration policies]” (NOU: 2011: 14: 67, my translation).

What is presented here is then a picture of a Norwegian society that holds gender equality as one of its most important values; the consensus is overwhelming. Equality exists; it is already present, as Norwegian society is based on it. It is also a matter of national pride; the word ‘nation’ is mentioned in the context of basic values a number of times. As Lister says, it forms an important component of people’s national identity (Lister 2009).

The need to clearly define values that Norwegian society is based on stems from the need to communicate them to those who do not adhere to such values – the (most often ‘non-Western’) immigrants. The underlying assumption here is then the gender *inequality* of immigrants coming to Norway. The fact that incoming immigrants do not place gender equality high on the value ladder is a problem that needs to be fixed. How can this be fixed? The answer given by the report is: through work.

Work is regarded as the most important factor to give each individual financial freedom, counteract poverty, reduce social differences and promote equality between women and men. (NOU: 2011: 14: 70, my translation).

Women's participation in the labour market contributes to gender equality. (ibid. 109)

To increase employment among the groups of women who participate the least in the labour market is important, not only from a gender equality objective, but also as part of poverty reduction. (ibid. 83)

The government recipe to promote gender equality is to increase women’s participation in the labour market. To be gender equal is to work. This “universal bread-winner” model of gender equality is inherent in the liberal welfare state model. Even though the opposite – the “caregiver parity” model – is being promoted in Norway by the father quota, when it comes to gender equality for immigrants, the universal bread-winner seems to be the preferred model. This does not mean that the father quota does not apply to immigrant fathers and participants in the Introduction

scheme. Immigrant fathers are entitled to the same amount of parental leave as fathers in the majority population. The father quota, however, is not presented as main means of achieving gender equality among immigrants, thereby implying male participation in the upbringing of children is perceived as a lesser problem than non-participation of immigrant women in the labour market.

Universal Bread-winner aims to promote economic equality and equal respect by organizing social arrangements so that women's lives can become more like men's are supposed to be now. (Fraser 1996: 58)

Fraser points out the tendency to set the male norm as a benchmark towards which women are compared, and this tendency is clear throughout the report. All occurrences of the word 'man' or 'men' are related to comparing rates of various indicators among men and women, such as labour market participation, amount of work experience, and living conditions. Men's rates are higher in most cases and that is presented as the desirable state that women should achieve as well. Women are compared to men who are set as a norm; and immigrants are compared to the majority population that is set as a norm. In spite of explicitly stating otherwise, the underlying problem presented here is variety and diversity of population, both in a positive and negative meaning of the words.

In the above detailed quotations from the report, it is worth noting that gender equality is connected to reducing poverty and socioeconomic differences. Elsewhere in the report women are described as a 'weak' group, together with youth and children. An example is a debate on increasing the social mobility of certain groups or participation in politics and civil society. The recipe for gender equality then seems to lie in economic redistribution, should I use Fraser's terminology (1995). The main aspect of gender equality that the state is preoccupied with, when it comes to immigrants, is economic self-sufficiency. The problem with immigrant women, as presented indirectly in the report, is that they do not have a paid work.

The focus of the gender equality measures, as presented in the report, lies with increasing female participation in the labour market. This contrasts with the views some of the interview participants voiced, where bigger involvement of men in the care of small children and household duties was a concern and a topic of discussions. Following Fraser's earlier argument, it is clear that the welfare state

indeed operates also on the level of people's private and family life, it is therefore reasonable to expect some measures addressing the care of young children, especially in the light of the fact that Norway was the first country in the world to introduce the father quota (Korsvik 2011). However, what I could observe instead in the report is a focus on institutional child care as a factor enabling women to enter the labour market:

(T)he cash benefit scheme acts as a barrier to the participation of children in kindergarten, thereby inhibiting immigrant women's opportunities for labour market participation. Thus this scheme is a barrier to equality. Children's participation in kindergarten will benefit the children and at the same time it will enable parents to participate in the workplace or qualification courses. (NOU: 2011: 14: 162, my translation)

Applying Fraser's dichotomy of means to achieve justice (redistribution addressing economic injustice, and recognition as a remedy for cultural and symbolic injustice), it seems that for the Norwegian state gender equality in the context of immigration is a matter of redistribution more than recognition. Economic aspects of gender equality appear to be on the peak of government's interest and subsequent measures. The aspect of achieving equality through recognition is rather marginal, mentioned only in relation to certain cultural and religious practices that exclude women from participation:

The values of equality and non-discrimination may conflict with religious communities that claim that only men can be religious leaders or that only men should be able to hold a position in society in general. (ibid. 339, my translation)

Since the main focus lies with redistribution measures, it might have slipped unnoticed that the few times recognition is mentioned, it can actually be interpreted as implying a common stereotype about non-Western religions being oppressive to women, thereby hindering gender equality:

One of the most visible and controversial aspects of Islam in a "Western" context is dress code. One point of view argues that clothing covering women's faces is oppressive to women and prevents integration because it

makes it difficult to communicate. Another point of view argues that religion, freedom of expression and equality imply that everybody should have a right to dress how they want to. (...) A middle position claims that religious headgear that hides the face is not consistent with holding an official work position that exercises power over others or where there is an already existing dress code but that it would be wrong to have a total ban [of the face covering headgear] in the public domain, also because such a ban can contribute to segregation of the few women it concerns. (ibid. 340, my translation)

The middle position seems to accommodate religious freedom of expression of Muslim women with the concept of gender equality as it tries not to discriminate them for their personal choices, allowing for human agency within cultural expressions (Phillips 2007). A different reading of the paragraph can allow for an understanding of an underlying assumption that full gender equality is possible only through adapting to the Norwegian societal rules and not within the cultural practice of the women's country of origin.

4.4 White Paper “A Comprehensive Integration Policy: Diversity and Community”

A White paper is a document written upon a request from the government when it wishes to present matters to the Storting (Parliament) that do not require a decision. It is a report that informs about work done in a particular field, and the discussions of the document in the Storting often form a draft of a future policy. The white paper “A Comprehensive Integration Policy” is a recommendation produced by the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social inclusion in October 2012. The report focuses on the comparison of conditions of immigrants to the rest of the population.

In each chapter and for each issue there is a description of status, challenges, and measures for concrete target groups, be it the entire population, all immigrants or various subgroups, for example, gender, age,

reason for immigration, residence in Norway, country of origin and employment, (Meld. St. 6 2012: 9, emphasis added, my translation)

The white paper is a recommendation with “emphasis (...) on presenting policies in the field [of integration], and measures addressing specific issues. The emphasis does not lie with presenting detailed situation descriptions” (ibid. 11), thereby representing a very suitable material for policy analysis. The white paper draws from different sources, among others research reports, hearings, Statistics Norway documents, and Official Norwegian Reports. The official report NOU 2011:14 that I analysed in the previous chapter is listed as one of the most important sources (ibid.).

As is evident from the citation above, the dimension of gender is taken into consideration. However, it becomes clear that ‘gender’ in this context really means ‘women’. In the summary of the most important points the government vows to work towards in the field of integration, the gender perspective is represented by the following point: “[the government wants] more women with immigrant background in the labour market” (ibid. 8). This is in line with the stance presented in the previous analysed document NOU 2011:14.

The word *likestilling* (equality) and *kjønnslikestilling* (gender equality) are being used interchangeably throughout the document, except for paragraphs that deal with discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, where *likestilling* acquires the meaning of equality in a broader sense.

The white paper has an overlap with the Official Norwegian Report 2011:14 to a certain degree; given the fact the NOU was one of the most important sources for compilation of the document. However, there are a several notable differences.

Gender equality is explicitly defined, or rather described, in the chapter called Community (*felleskap*). Interestingly, the subheading gender equality is listed under the section called ‘Agree to disagree’ and starts by explaining how conflicts are inevitable in any democratic society’s when personal choices clash with society values, which can be explained by different human rights, such as religious freedom and gender equality, or different interpretations of the same right, for example freedom of speech, being in opposition to each other (Meld. St. 6 2012: 105). Other

categories in the subpart of ‘Agree to disagree’ are religious views, religious garments and symbols, and the freedom of speech.

The selection of these topics as areas of potential conflict and their positioning together can be interpreted in several ways. As already shown in the analysis of NOU 2011: 4, the Norwegian state is concerned with reconciliation of gender equality as one of its core values, and freedom of expression, of which religious freedoms can be considered a subpart. Asking what the problem is represented to be here (and in this case, it is in the literal meaning of the word ‘problem’ as one of the synonyms for the word ‘conflict’) the obvious answer is effort to maintain the ideal of individualism and individual rights, including right to follow a religion and its practices as well as right to be equal, not only on the grounds of gender.

Positioning religion, gender equality and hijab in one category draws on popular perceptions of immigrant women as Muslim and therefore oppressed, lacking their own agenda and following male-imposed rules, being marked as religious and ethnic “others” (Furseth 2011). Reading it in a different way and looking for underlying assumptions, I thus get a slightly different picture: of an unequal, covered-up woman who is not free to speak.

There is a noticeable shift in the way the White paper is organized from the focus on gender equality in the labour market to equality within the family. The main emphasis still lies on achieving gender equality through paid labour but a dimension of equality in private life is added. In line with welfare state promoted individualism (Rugkaasa 2010) equality is defined in a following way:

*Every individual, man or woman, has the right to decide over their own lives and their own body (...) all women and men should be free to choose their own priorities and choose lifestyles within the framework of Norwegian law, without experiencing sanctions from family, group or society at large. **This includes the right to organize family life as one would like.** Gender equality remains an important goal and a priority value for the government. Continuous efforts to promote gender equality in all areas of society are being made. Financial independence is the pillar for all equality. Work and*

*personal income gives security and choices for the individual and the family.
(Meld. St. 6 2012: 105-106, emphasis added, my translation)*

The part in bold in this citation points at the other side of employment, which is influence on family life. Equality means the possibility to make independent choices, both in private and work life. Further in the text of the quoted paragraph, however, the emphasis is on work returns. Also elsewhere in the text, the arena of private and family life and changes required in order to achieve equality are mentioned. Family and equality policies should be combined to make balancing work and childcare easier, both for mothers and fathers, which is central “to achieving equality between women and men, both in the workplace and in the family” with the goal of more equal sharing of the parental leave (ibid. 80). More involvement of fathers in the parental leave will enable women to participate more in the labour market and the parenthood will become more equal (ibid.).

Unlike in the NOU 2011:14, equality now becomes a project for men as well. The changes required on one side need to be matched by efforts from the other side; women-mothers employed outside the home need men-fathers to participate more in the childcare. Reform, the resource centre for immigrant men and men with immigrant background, in cooperation with regional equality centres, has developed standardized courses aimed at employees of municipal services to strengthen expertise about fathers and equal parenthood in public services. Starting in autumn 2012 there are also courses aimed at teachers in the introductory program for newly arrived immigrants (ibid. 83). Overall I could observe in the White paper that family is being stressed more and the need for work life balance for both men and women is claimed to be important.

Work, however, remains a cornerstone of gender equality and the individual freedom of choice has its limits. From a picture of working women as a token of gender equality the focus shifts slightly to a different, yet still similar, picture of working women AND men sharing childcare duties. Work still takes preference to any other activity, including caring for children, and the freedom of choice that is emphasised in the previous paragraph in the matter of organizing one’s life has its boundaries:

Financial independence is a prerequisite for real equality (...) Paid work grants important rights to pensions, parental benefit, sickness pay etc. On the other hand, freedom of choice is a fact. Both women and men can choose to stay at home with children but they should know the consequences of losing the rights to various benefits by not being employed in a paid job (Meld. St. 6 2012: 80).

The quotation appears to be simply stating the facts that are true for the functioning of a welfare state. The participation in the labour market is a prerequisite for receiving various forms of benefits. The benefits are an expression of solidarity and are based on the taxation of people's incomes. It is therefore logical that those who can, but still do not contribute to the common wealth should not be entitled to using it.

On the other hand, seen from a gender equality perspective, this paragraph gives us important information about the state of gender equality in Norway in general, not just in relation to immigrants and minorities. In spite of Norway making progress towards the caregiver parity model (Fraser 1996) by employing various measures including cash for care benefit and father quota (Korsvik 2011, Borchorst 2008), it is still primarily the woman that stays at home with a young child. It has been described in a number of studies that women are hit by the so-called 'child penalty' (Borchorst 2008: 40). Women miss out on wage increase, career opportunities and pension contributions the more children they have. The insurance based pension will lead to a bigger gender-income inequality in old age as women have lower salaries and shorter working life time (ibid). In the above paragraph, the Norwegian government not only acknowledges the child penalty but also uses it to increase the pressure on the immigrant women and women with minority background to participate in the labour market. The previous argument, where the employment rates of the majority female population were set as a standard for the immigrant and minority women to match in order to be gender equal, then seems to be slightly shaken as it shows that there are still significant gaps, even within the area of paid work that is supposedly the means to achieve equality.

Despite gender equality being considered achieved and taken for granted by most of the majority population in Norway (and Scandinavia), the contradiction

described above rather points towards the irreconcilability of gender equality and the welfare state as debated by many (Pateman 1988, Hirdman 1990, Fraser 1996).

4.5 Intro: Introduction to Norwegian society for adult immigrants

Intro: Introduction to Norwegian society for adult immigrants (hereafter called Intro) is a book published by the biggest Norwegian publishing house Cappelen Damm. The book has been published in 16 languages, in accordance with the Introductory Law that requires newly arrived (eligible) immigrants and refugees to attend 50 hours of societal knowledge course (*samfunnskunnskap*) in a language they understand. The copy I am analysing is in English and was published in 2005. I have been able to compare this copy to a newer version in Norwegian that was published in 2012 and there are no significant differences other than updated statistics (average age of first marriage, average salary etc.). The publishing house also provides online resources on the webpage intro.cappelendamm.no. There are slight differences between the book and the online materials, especially in the order of topics within the lessons (interestingly, the topic of democracy and values was moved from being in the second chapter in the book from 2005 to being in the last one in the up to date material found). I will, however, focus on the book as I did not receive any indication throughout the interviews that online resources are being used in the classes, while it was confirmed to me that the book is indeed being used, even though it was the Norwegian version.

According to the informants I interviewed, who use this book, the topic of gender equality is presented throughout the book. Various aspects of gender equality are discussed in different chapters of the book and equality of genders is implicit in the drawings that help course participants understand the topics better. A section of the chapter on democracy, welfare and values deals specifically with equality and equal worth. The section is divided into two sub-parts: laws against discrimination and gender equality.

The topic of equality and equal worth is introduced in a non-normative, open way. The book asks the course participants for their own definition of equality and equal worth, thereby opening up for the discussion and input from each participant

(Dolve and Grønningen 2005: 39). At the same time, this highlights the importance and relevance of the second part of this thesis with the analysis of personal views and opinions of teachers and case workers, as they are the ones moderating these debates on open-ended questions and their stance on the topic will become the 'correct one', the norm, given their position of representing the Norwegian government by proxy.

Gender is mentioned in connection with antidiscrimination law, together with nationality, skin colour, language, religion and sexual orientation. Gender features on the first place in the list of possible causes for discrimination. In the sub-part on gender equality there is no clear definition of what the concept means. Two aspects of gender equality are mentioned in the first paragraph, thereby stressing their importance to the audience: "Women in Norway have the same rights as men. They have the same rights to inherit. Norwegian women are just as well educated as men." (ibid. 40) The first sentence about same rights of men and women in Norway seems to be elaborated by the following statements, providing an explanation of the 'same rights' in a way. It would then appear that the most important and relevant fact about equality between genders is inheritance rights and education. I could choose to read this literally, as authors' assumptions that education and inheritance rights are the main areas of focus when it comes to gender equality. This seems rather improbable, given the fact that nowhere in the documents previously analysed did I encounter the topic of inheritance, and the topic of education was far from the focus. Or I could go deeper and look at the areas of life that are represented by these two aspects of equality. Inheritance rights are directly linked to the position of women within the family, while education represents the position of women outside home, in the public domain. These can then be understood as representing equal position of women both in private and public life.

The second paragraph describes the fight for equal rights in the beginning of twentieth century and presents dates when women gained the right to vote and the right to be elected. The third paragraph continues to describe the fight for equality in the 1970s when women requested equality in the labour market and at home. It mentions same pay and day care for children as two important claims that were made at that time. It also touches on the subject of the so-called 'second shift' women experienced after entering the labour market and still having to take care of

the household and children (Hochschild 1989). The section concludes with a paragraph about women still bearing the main responsibility for home and children, and people still discussing how housework should be shared (Dolve and Grønningen 2005: 41). At the end there is a task for course participants to discuss consequences of gender equality.

This represents an interesting shift from the normative approach to gender equality and the strong focus on labour market participation as a means of achieving it. The structure of the section gives space for negotiating the meaning of the gender equality concept and its real life implications and consequences. What was selected by the authors of the book (and approved by the authorities as suitable for being used in the course about Norwegian society) as most important piece of information about Norwegian gender equality is the concept of work life balance. This very brief summary of what gender equality means in Norway contains references to both public and private life and struggles to negotiate the balance between the two. This has also been confirmed by the informants during the interviews as being of central importance to the newly arrived immigrants.

The issue of what has been called the ‘stalling revolution’, when the changes brought by women entering the labour market were not mirrored by men taking over a share of care for the household, has been a topic of research and debates for several decades. The term ‘second shift’, as well as ‘stalling revolution’, was coined by Arlie Hochschild in her book *The Second Shift* (1989). Even though Hochschild researched the work life balance of working parents, her conclusions can be applied to any double-income household. Judging from the documents I have gone through in my analysis so far, the Norwegian state is not preoccupied with addressing this situation when promoting increased labour market participation of women. The state does regulate people’s private lives in the case of childcare arrangements and, as I have shown in the White paper ‘A comprehensive integration policy’, it promotes equal sharing of child-related duties. When it comes to non-child-related household duties the state remains silent and chooses instead to promote labour market participation and financial independence as the main remedies for inequality between genders.

The workbook addresses gender-related topics in most chapters; it is more implicit when the focus lies with other topics but the normativity is still present. All topics throughout the book are presented by an imaginary trio of women: grandmother, mother, and daughter. This is meant to represent different views on Norwegian society at different times in history. It can also be interpreted as giving voice to women and use a non-dominant perspective. Interviews with real people are at the end of each chapter, and women are represented as often as men and introduced in positions of authority. They are all of immigrant background which is clear from their names and from the photographs included.

In the paragraph about Norwegian language classes photographs of both men and women are attached, stressing the importance of the language skills for both genders. Based on the information gained from the interviews, this point appears to be of particular importance. Overall, the artwork in the books makes an effort to depict both men and women in gender non-stereotypical positions and activities, for example male assistant in the kindergarten or female hiring manager, even though there are several stereotypical vocations depicted (female hairdresser and male electrician). It also often depicts men with children. In the section about job seeking there are only women on the pictures. There is a female manager going through CVs, there is a female candidate inquiring about a position, and a female candidate during an interview. All this represents the same discourse that I could observe in the government documents, where female labour market participation is the hallmark of gender equality. This is to an extent consistent with the presentation of gender equality in the sub-section about democracy, equality and equal worth in the Intro book.

Gender equality is explicitly mentioned in the chapter on education. It appears in connection with equal rights to education and the history of education in Norway. In the discussion between the imaginary grandmother, mother and daughter, the grandmother speaks about segregated education and mother mentions different preferences for boys and girls. The daughter then reacts by saying: "I am glad I go to school now. Now both girls and boys can try everything and see what they like best" (Dolve and Grønningen 2005: 68). Again, gender equality in education is accentuated.

In the chapter on children and family, parental leave arrangements are briefly mentioned and it explicitly spells out that both mother and father can stay at home with young children, thereby further encouraging sharing of childcare responsibilities between genders. The normative approach to bringing up children in a welfare state, as well as labour market participation norm, can be detected in a section about kindergartens: “Many children are in nursery school while their *mother and father* are at work” (ibid. 110, emphasis added). This is then supposed to be further discussed as the question ‘why are many children in Norway in nursery school?’ is one of the suggestions for a debate on the topic.

Within the same chapter it is again repeated that “it is *normal* for both men and women to work outside the home” (ibid. 113, emphasis added). It is normal, therefore it is a norm, with all the consequences that complying or not complying with it has. It is also pointed out again that men and women share housework, but that women spend more time doing house chores than men do. Equality is once again shown in the same retirement age for both men and women and an emphasis is put on the fact that your earnings determine the amount you get after retirement. Inheritance rights for men and women reappear too.

It is interesting that in connection with pensions, the workbook touches upon the subject of the ‘child penalty’ I have discussed above. It states that many women receive only a basic pension, the same one that people who never worked in a paid job receive. This statement is then supposed to be discussed and possible causes revealed. This can be understood as showing the newly arrived immigrants the consequences of their potential choice to stay at home, as mentioned in the White paper above. However, by stating this as a fact in a book that potentially has normative and formative influence on people coming from different cultures, or at the very least can shape the view the course participants have of Norway and Norwegians, I could read this as a way of providing the course participants with an example they can identify themselves with. Showing the Norwegian society as not hundred percent equal makes it less alien, less of an ‘unachievable standard’. Overall, the book provides a more realistic picture of the Norwegian society than the one implied in the official government documents. Equality between genders is pointed out, but is presented as open for debates and interpretations. Work is presented not in ideological terms of being means for achieving equality, but rather a

necessity. It also shows the other side of the labour market equality, and that is housework sharing and the inequality that prevails there.

To conclude, explicit references to gender equality are being made mostly in connection with the future generation, because the equality measures mentioned in the book are mostly aimed at the children of present day immigrants; stress is put on equal opportunities and approaches in children's upbringing, education, and inheritance. When it comes to immigrants themselves, the definitions are not as strict, rather open for debate and interpretations in the light of people's culture from the country of their origin. Work is stressed as a target activity for both men and women but it is not presented as a means to achieve gender equality.

4.6 Reoccurring patterns

I observed a rather large 'ideology' gap between the documents produced at the government level and the book that brings us closer to the 'street level'. The Official Norwegian Report and the White paper are preoccupied with defining core Norwegian values and directions for integration, while the workbook mostly omits any such efforts and seem to be more focused on ensuring not compliance with the equality model, but an understanding of and 'non-resistance' to it, with the aim of promoting equality among the children of the immigrants.

The concept of work as a means of achieving gender equality seems to be central to the NOU and the White paper, it occurs to a lesser degree in the circulaire as well. Even though the concept of work as means to achieve gender equality is not so prominent in the circulaire, it is implied there through the focus on individual financial independence. There is a slight difference between the NOU that focuses almost exclusively on work, and the White paper that mentions the division of labour within the family, even though that mostly means sharing the childcare duties.

The book for the societal knowledge course represents a very different approach to the topic of gender equality than the documents previously analysed in this chapter. It promotes an individual person's perspective on the topic by

encouraging discussions, and is more concerned with the private sphere and schooling, rather than work. Work is presented as a necessity but not an ideological tool: people (women) are not becoming equal or liberated by working. Private sphere, specifically children's upbringing, and schooling are the arenas where equality between genders matters the most.

5. Interview analysis

In the previous chapter I have shown with a sample of the official documents that while they are quite clear on the matter of the goals of integration and the scheme that is supposed to facilitate it, the means of achieving these goals are largely unspecified. It is at the level of the street level bureaucrats that these means are being negotiated every day. Given the ambivalence of the documents case workers and teachers work with, the definitions of the values they present to the newly arrived immigrants (and gender equality being one of them) are largely up to their discretion (Lipsky 2010). The interviews will therefore provide valuable insight into how these everyday definitions are being made, locally, and what picture of the hallmark of the Scandinavian welfare state – gender equality – the Introduction scheme participants get.

In the data obtained from the interviews I am looking for implicit and explicit mentions of gender equality, its different aspects and relevance for the particular situation of Introduction scheme participants, as perceived by the street level bureaucrats. I am looking for problematisations of the understandings of the gender equality concept and its application to the newly arrived immigrants' life situations.

5.1 Sample and logistics

I have conducted six interviews over the course of four months. In total, I have spoken to eight people, as two of the interviews were conducted with two interviewees. The age of the interviewees ranges from mid-twenties to mid-sixties. There are both ethnic Norwegians, and immigrants or people with immigrant background. In the sample there were three ethnic Norwegians, born and raised in

Norway, one ethnic Norwegian raised abroad (in Africa), one immigrant who came to Norway in adult age and three people with immigrant background who came to Norway as small children and were raised in Norway. The family status of interviewees varies from single, cohabitating, married, and with or without children. All of the interviewees have education in humanities or social sciences, some in education as well. Out of the eight interviewees three work in Oslo; five work in municipalities close by (Sørum, Skedsmo, Rælingen).

The interviews were conducted in settings of the interviewees' choice, most often at their office. In some cases we met in public space, such as university or café. The interviewees were presented with a list of topics beforehand, so that they could prepare themselves. Given the nature of the interviews that were conducted as semi-structured, the questions asked were not standardized for all the interviews. However, the central topics were covered in all of them. I have also adjusted the interview process after each one conducted, reflecting the experience, responses and overall impression of the interview.

All of the interviews were conducted in English, even though I offered the interviewees the option to answer my English questions in Norwegian if that makes expressing themselves fully easier.

In spite of obtaining agreement with using interviewees' real names, I am choosing not to do so and will try to avoid mentioning any information that could lead to them being identified. Trying to find a balance between the main principles of conducting a research that say, on one hand, that the safety and non-harm of the informants is of utmost importance, and on the other hand, that the research should be replicable and verifiable (Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, law and the humanities 2013), I am choosing to be cautious and maintain the informants' anonymity. I am, however, mentioning information about some aspects of the informants' background that I deem relevant for the analysis.

5.2 Challenges and influences

As mentioned in the chapter on methods and sample, it has proved to be rather difficult to enter the field of case workers and teachers. Those were, however, not the only challenges I encountered. At times I had to negotiate my position and authority as a researcher. In spite of my initial negative perception of the authority and power shift, I later came to appreciate the perspective it provided me with, allowing me to experience a position that is in some aspects similar to the one of the course participants – an immigrant being ‘taught’ about the functioning of the Norwegian society and the rules of integration.²⁰

In the tradition of feminist research, I tried to avoid the subject-object dichotomy and instead introduce more egalitarian, connection-based relationship (Sprague and Kobrynowicz 2004: 32-33). I did not intend to assume a position of authority in any of the interviews and tried to eliminate this by stressing that the interviewees are the bearers of knowledge. In several cases I contributed my own opinion on the subject discussed, which led to more open responses from the interviewees who took the interview for a conversation between equals and that allowed me to gain richer information. In one case, however, this approach failed and the interviewee assumed the position of authority instead, as a subject matter expert and, as I perceive it, as decisive authority on issues related to Norway from the position of ethnic Norwegian. The interviewee steered the conversation and rejected all attempts to be distracted, assuming the position of subject matter expert who has more complete knowledge about what is relevant within the topic. All interviews, however, brought interesting and important information, no matter how it was conducted.

While conducting and analysing the interviews from respondents with immigrant backgrounds, I realized that their views and opinions might cover both the standpoint of an expert in the field of integration, and an object of integration efforts. Even though they were not integrated through the Introductory scheme, which is the focus of this thesis, they have nevertheless been integrated and lived the

²⁰ I wish to stress that I am aware of the fact that my position is far from the position of the Introduction scheme participants, and in no way do I want to deny the privileges that my background, education, language skills, and ethnicity give me.

experience of becoming a part of the Norwegian society. Their insights therefore provide a much needed perspective.

5.3 Analysis

What is the interviewees' view of gender equality? Do they believe gender equality is relevant for immigrants and refugees? If so, how relevant is it for the newly arrived immigrants? What concrete aspects of gender equality are relevant for immigrants' everyday lives? How is it covered in the work the interviewees do? It is essential to look at the understanding of gender equality the street level bureaucrats have and what shapes it in order to understand how this basic Norwegian value is presented to immigrants and refugees.

At first I tried to establish just how important gender equality is to having a sense of being Norwegian, for the Norwegian identity, and what other aspects form the sense of belonging to Norway. I asked for a definition of what it means to be a Norwegian. In spite of the fact that all of the interviewees are Norwegian citizens, some approached this question as a definition of, so to say, an external phenomenon. Some spoke about cultural codes, some about love of the country and willingness to fight for it in the ranks of the Norwegian army, in a fashion close to a nineteenth-century understanding of national belonging. One of the informants used the word 'ideology', saying that to be a Norwegian means to adhere to Norwegian values and ideologies.

To be a Norwegian... such a tough question! I cannot answer that for myself but (...) when other people look at me, for them to be a Norwegian is to be able to speak well Norwegian, have a job and be able to provide for yourself and accept Norwegian ideologies and values. (...) [Due to my work] I am in a lot of conferences where I always hear 'why are they not like us?', there's an expectation from their side that we need to fill in and that's why I'm saying conform to Norwegian ideologies and values

I choose to understand the term in the Althusserian sense as representation of the imaginary relationship that individuals have to their real conditions of existence,

which has the function to constitute concrete individuals as subjects (Althusser 1971). ‘Norwegianness’ in this sense is an imaginary concept that does not necessarily relate to reality and the fact the interviewee chose to use this word highlights the discrepancy between the imagined status quo and the lived reality. The fact that the interviewee is of immigrant background might have influenced her choice of words and the way she perceives the situation. It can be understood as a parallel of Gressgård and Jacobsen’s comparative miss (2002), this time on an individual level, where actual life experience of a person with immigrant background highlights the social constructed-ness of the ‘ideal Norwegianness’.

Several other interviewees pointed out the difference between the ideal and reality when talking about Norwegian values, thus echoing the point made by Gressgård and Jacobsen. Most agreed that there are values that form Norwegianness, like democracy, freedom of speech, gender and other equality, and solidarity. One interviewee brought up the need to reformulate the definition of the word ‘Norwegian’ with so many Norwegians now being of an immigrant origin:

I think, in a way we have to start talking about this being ‘new Norwegian’ thing as a sort of a mix (...) trying to mix the things they have from their country, the culture, the tradition, with a bit of ethnic Norwegian culture. And that mix is what I would call being Norwegian.

At the same time, Norwegianness becomes a fluid, contextual phenomenon for the interviewees who were not born in Norway or have immigrant parents. The set of values that, according to the government documents, forms the basis of Norwegian society, also forms a base for subjective interpretations that differ in various situations, leading to including and excluding members in any given moment, much as described by Katrine Fangen in her studies of Somali immigrants in Norway (Fangen 2007a, 2007b). One of my respondents who was not born in Norway, but is a Norwegian citizen now, describes her experience with integration in her work as well as her own life:

I’ve had people being mad at me, saying ‘why don’t you say you’re Norwegian?’ Well, I cannot say it because you choose for me when I’m a Norwegian. When there’s something good, if I do something good, I’m a Norwegian, but if I do something wrong, I’m a Somali (...) I define myself as

a third culture child instead [taking the good from both Somali and Norwegian cultures]. That's why I find it hard to define what it is to be a Norwegian because I feel like everybody else is defining it for me.

This brings us back to the concept of ideology as an imaginary entity with no basis in the actual reality (even though its influence can have effects on how people perceive the reality they live in). If this can be subjectively perceived as such in the case of integration as a whole, what is then the image or lived reality of gender equality?

5.3.1 Representations of gender equality

There are many ways the concept of gender equality is understood by the case workers and teachers working with Introduction scheme participants. They tend to focus on different elements of the complex concept and stress different practical implications of presenting gender equality to their clients, thereby shaping the picture of what gender equality means in Norway for their clients. In the analysis, I will show whether the aspects of gender equality perceived as important to the interviewees, as well as aspects perceived as important to be presented to the course participants, correlate with what is considered important in the documents analysed in the previous chapter.

5.3.1.1 Gender equality as a linear process of social evolution

One of the representations of gender equality I encountered concerned not the content of the concept (what it means to be gender equal), but rather the form of achieving it. Two refugee consultants (*flyktningkonsulenter*) from a municipality outside of Oslo, when speaking about gender equality, employ expressions similar to the travel metaphor (Skjeie and Teigen 2006). The travel metaphor uses

the cherished image of the 'road towards' gender equality—the view of gradual equalization between women and men (...) The travel metaphor

portrays equality as a linear process of evolvement where we are all, together, continuously taking new steps towards the goal. (ibid. 187)

The metaphor of gender equality as a journey with a fixed goal at the end is often used to explain the inconsistency between the image of Nordic countries as the gender equality ‘Nirvana’ (Lister 2009) and the persistence of strong institutional male dominance (Skjeie and Teigen 2006: 187). The goal is achievable, “we just have to travel for long and far enough” (ibid.).

The refugee consultants talked about incorporating the topic of gender equality into courses that are mandatory for Introduction scheme participants in their municipality, but are not a part of the minimum requirement of the Norwegian and societal knowledge course. These courses deal with the topics of family life and parenting where, within these topics, gender equality is discussed. To make the topic more acceptable and present the ideal of gender equality in a way the immigrants can relate to, the travel metaphor is employed. Gender equality is presented as a process, as a gradual development of the Norwegian society. The consultants draw parallels between the Norwegian society at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the cultures in the countries of origin of the course participants. This, however, is not entirely their own personal take on the topic. The original course structure was taken over from courses certified by Bufetat (Child, Youth and Family Directorate) and aimed at the majority population.

This framing (in Goffmann’s sense of the word) of gender equality as a linear, yet not finished, process, a straightforward journey with an achievable goal, can be traced in the Intro workbook as well. When the dimension of a different culture is added to the discourse, and these different cultures are compared to Norway in the past century, a picture of societal evolution as a unilinear process emerges, as described by the classics of sociology Comte and Spencer (Adams and Sydie 2002). In the unilinear sociocultural evolution theory, the contemporary Western society is seen as the most developed and valuable while all other cultures are considered pre-stages to the standard that is the Western culture. Drawing the parallel between Norway back in the day and other cultures now implies the thought patterns behind the approach. According to Døving, the evolutionist understanding of the integration process is one of the three main assumptions that underlie the

debates about integration in the contemporary Norwegian society. The other two are a conviction that members of society have to share basic values, and that the state has to ensure group rights to preserve minority cultures (2009: 67). Minority cultures in a multicultural society should undergo a ‘civilizational development’ (ibid.) and, based on some of the understandings I encountered in the interviews with the street level bureaucrats, being gender equal is one of the indicators of a developed society.

5.3.1.2 Gender equality as work life balance

The courses and activities that form the Introduction scheme should provide the participants with practical and useful information that enables them to navigate everyday life in Norway and ideally become self-sufficient as soon as possible (Introduksjonsprogram, undated, imdi.no). The rather abstract notion of the values that form the base of Norwegian society, as discussed in chapter 4, need to be translated into the concrete language of daily life situations and experiences. The same applies to the concept of gender equality.

In four out of the six interviewees I conducted, work life balance became the most important topic within the gender equality concept. It is perceived by the interviewees as the most relevant and with the biggest impact on practical everyday life of the program and course participants. The concept of gender equality, as understood by most of the interviewees, operates with an underlying assumption that the equality between men and women needs to be achieved within a household that is formed by a heterosexual couple²¹, much like in the early days of gender equality institutionalisation (Wetterberg and Melby 2008). Gender equality equals fair division of rights and duties between a man and a woman in a family, both at home and outside of home.

The official equality discourse puts the main focus on enabling the immigrant women to enter the labour market in terms of providing them with the knowledge of language and information about work environment in Norway. The street level bureaucrats working with the Introduction scheme seem to be

²¹ Throughout the interviews the arena of promoting gender equality was as a default understood to be a nuclear family: mother, father and children. I follow this understanding in my analysis.

preoccupied with trying to make female work outside of home acceptable, and enable necessary changes in the family that need to be implemented in order to allow the women to have a job.

The interviewees all mention that women are, in most cases, willing to take a job outside of home. The bigger issue reportedly is to encourage the men to become more involved in running the household and participating more actively in the child care duties. The father that is 'present' in the family and does both practical and emotional work within the family was described by one of the teachers as "a very Nordic model of doing things". So while the requirement for women to attend the same courses as men and to find a job afterwards needs little explaining, and once the logic of better living conditions of a double income family is accepted, the subsequent shift in the organization of reproductive work becomes a field of controversy:

(M)en would say: I can stay home but the child would never have it, it's no good for the child because I can't take care of the child as good as his mother does and therefore she should be at home. And the woman would say: yeah of course I take care of the child better than you but that doesn't mean I have to be at home

This quote, from a case worker in a small municipality outside of Oslo, illustrates the main issue the principles of gender equality present. How is it framed? And what is the problem represented to be here?

The traditional division of labour is perceived – *framed* – as natural. Women are naturally drawn to the reproductive work in the household while men are naturally the providers. This is the complementary role model of the family as described by Talcott Parsons (1955). It is hard to force a different frame onto the immigrant families and some case workers admit they do not "push the absolute equality", but rather open up the topics that were out of the immigrant families' scope before. In order to tackle this discrepancy between the willingness to accept changes in the productive roles, and reluctance to make similar changes in the reproductive arena, the street level bureaucrats need to reframe the issue of gender equality.

Female labour market participation is justified with economic arguments. Several times the interviewees mention buying a property as a motivation for families to conform to the full employment and double income family norm. Financial benefit to the family is then used as an argument for changes in the private life that necessarily follow the employment of both adult members of the family.

The institutionalised gender equality in the form of sharing the parental leave and child sickness leave, and the financial benefits that are tied to these arrangements, are used as leverage to promote the involvement of men-fathers in the upbringing of the children and connected household duties. A case worker from Oslo said that “the daddy quota is more enforced in the intro program than in the majority society” and that immigrant men are encouraged to stay at home with sick children to not lose the child sickness leave days fathers are entitled to.²² The issue of fathers staying at home when children are sick appeared in several of the interviews and some admit to not only ‘encouraging’ the fathers to take the child sick leave, but “making sure fathers stay at home when kids are sick”.

What is the problem represented to be here? In the eyes of the case workers and teachers I spoke to, the problem is a similar phenomenon to the ‘stalling revolution’ that Hochschild described in her book *The Second Shift* (1989). There is, however, a significant difference between the situation described by Hochschild, where women struggle to manage their duties after the second wave of feminism sent them to paid jobs, while men still assumed they would also take the primary care of the household and children. As representatives of the Norwegian state and culture, the street level bureaucrats find themselves responsible for propelling the ‘revolution’ on both fronts at the same time. According to the interviewees, women who participate in the Introduction scheme need to be encouraged to want to acquire a paid job, and at the same time the male participants require the same (or stronger) encouragement to adapt to the situation and reorganize the traditional division of roles in the family. While it is more understandable that the state attempts to regulate activities connected to the labour market, it proves to be more difficult to interfere in what is perceived as the private sphere.

²² Work Environment Law (Arbeidsmiljøloven) 2005 § 12-9. The right to stay at home with sick children is also grounded in the Introductory Law as well, since participation in the Introduction scheme is regarded as employment in this respect.

5.3.1.3 Gender equality as a personal choice

In the interviews with case workers and teachers I tried to approach the topic of gender equality from several angles. I asked for their personal definition of the concept and what it means to them, before moving to the topic of how gender equality is presented to Introduction scheme participants and what elements are relevant for them. I was looking for any links between the personal views and the picture they relay to the course participants. Given the semi-opened structure of the interviews, I was not able to elicit the same information from all the informants; however, a distinct pattern of difference between understandings of gender equality in their own lives and in the lives of Introduction scheme participants became visible.

When asked for a definition of gender equality, most of the interviewees mentioned women in work and non-discrimination at work place as the first thing. Interviewees also mentioned gender equality and non-discrimination legislation, which is also mostly connected to the work life. These are important aspects of the concept and relevant to the informants' work, where they speak about the topic with the Introduction scheme participants, and for them personally in their own work life. When asked specifically about what gender equality means to them personally, I received the following answers:

You can choose what you want to do, what you want to study, who you want to live with, if you want to marry, if you want to live with a man or a woman.

[To me, to be gender equal means] mainly that I can make my own choices, when it comes to education, finances. That what I say has the same value as a man.

[Gender quality means] being able to speak up your mind without fearing "oh I'm a girl, maybe I should leave it". Expressing yourself is a part of gender equality too.

These answers all illustrate a slightly different point of view on gender equality. Even though the term 'equality' in itself implies comparing two or more subjects, in these answers the interviewees focused on the individualistic aspect of

gender equality. In the context of their private lives gender equality seems to be less about finding a balance in the division of labour within a heterosexual couple; the stress is rather on a possibility of making individual choices and expressing one's personality. The ability to make choices independently based on individual preferences, stressed by the interviewees, hints at an understanding of gender equality as a human right, as grounded in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, www.un.org).

The work-related and work life balance aspects of gender equality are still the most prominent ones in all of the interviews I conducted, and is relevant to both teachers and case workers as well as course participants. The individual choice aspect, however, seems to be more relevant to the informants only and not to the course participants, as this understanding of gender equality only emerged during questions about aspects relevant in interviewees' personal lives.

Returning to the topic of the welfare state and gender equality will help us understand what the problem is represented to be here. The Nordic brand of the welfare state is committed to full employment of its population through an active employment policy (Rugkaasa 2010: 75) and the Introduction scheme is an example of such a policy. Equality is one of its core values (ibid. 72). I have shown, however, that the welfare state is first and foremost preoccupied with economic redistribution (Fraser 1996: 55) and since its formation, class, or economic, equality has been considered more important than other types of equality, including gender equality (Borchorst 1998: 163). This forms a hierarchy of interests that accentuates economic aspect as the most important one in achieving equality, gender equality included.

For immigrants who arrive in Norway, this hierarchy of interests determines the 'type' of gender equality that will be presented to them. For the Introduction scheme participants, it is considered important to achieve gender equality through work; work life balance and the division of productive and reproductive labour are perceived as the most relevant and important, both by policy creators and street level bureaucrats. For street level bureaucrats themselves, there exist other dimensions and understandings of the gender equality, because, being Norwegian, the economic structure of gender equality is already (at least partly) in place for them.

Another core value of the Nordic type of welfare state is individualism (Rugkaasa 2010: 72) and related defamilialisation. The concept of defamilialisation “measures the degree to which regimes unburden households and diminish the *dependence of kinship*” (Esping-Andersen 1999: 51 in Borchorst 2008: 31, emphasis added). Scandinavian countries are considered ‘uniquely defamilialised’ through the system of family allowances, tax deductions and care services for children and the elderly (ibid.). The concept of defamilialisation has been devised by Esping-Andersen after feminist critique of his theory of three types of welfare states based on the degree of decommodification.²³ Given the fact that gender equality is often considered ‘part and parcel’ of the Nordic welfare state, and the fact that the concept of defamilialisation was introduced to address the lack of gender perspective in the welfare state research, I can conclude that the independence of kinship and focus on individuals is a part of the official understanding of gender equality.

For the Introduction scheme participants, however, gender equality seems to be less about defamilialisation, even though the structure of childcare, tax deductions and family allowances is still in place. Gender equality considered relevant to them is about a work life balance that presupposes cohabitation of spouses or partners and their (to an extent) mutual dependence. Two of the interviewees working in Oslo pointed out that they do not identify themselves with everything they present to the Introduction scheme participants, and that their personal views might be different to what they are expected to communicate as representatives of Norway towards newly arrived immigrants. One of the informants succinctly called this “selling the democracy and equality package” that you get when growing up in Norway.

The problem then seems to be that there exists a sort of ‘Maslow’s pyramid of gender equality’ that distinguishes between ‘basic’ levels of gender equality that need to be in place before one can move up to the ‘less basic’ and thereby non-essential level. The basic level seems to be the economic independence, the rest is

²³ The welfare state typology includes the Scandinavian welfare state, the liberal welfare state, and the conservative-corporatist welfare state model. The concept central for differentiation between these models is decommodification which “takes stock of the state-market connection by measuring the capacity of welfare states to render the living standards of individuals independent of pure market forces” (Esping-Andersen in Borchorst 2008: 30)

perceived as a superstructure in the Marxist understanding of the concepts of base and superstructure (Williams 1973).

5.3.1.4 Gender equality and sexual orientation

In general, the most important aspects of gender equality for the interviewed street level bureaucrats were female labour participation and work life balance, the aspect of personal choice and expression was added when talking about interviewees' personal lives. Two of the interviewees, however, mentioned the concept of sexual orientation in connection with gender equality. One placed the matter of sexual orientation in a context of personal choice, in the quotation I have already analysed: "You can choose what you want to do, what you want to study, who you want to live with, if you want to marry, if you want to live with a *man or a woman*." Others pointed out a page in the book Intro that was analysed in the chapter 4. In a section about Norwegian demographic characteristics, there are illustrations of different types of families and cohabitations and a same sex couple is one of them. The interviewee pointed at the illustration as an example of a gender equality-related topic being presented in different parts of the book.

Sexuality is indeed important in the theory of gender. According to Judith Butler there is a link between sexuality and gender, and she uses Catharine MacKinnon's work to illustrate her own stance:

Stopped as an attribute of a person, sex inequality takes the form of gender; moving as a relation between people, it takes the form of sexuality. Gender emerges as the congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women. (MacKinnon in Butler 1999: xii)

In Butler's understanding, institutional heterosexuality requires, as well as produces, binary gender system. The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation, in which the masculine term is differentiated from the feminine. This differentiation is accomplished through practices of heterosexual desire (ibid. 30). If heterosexuality produces hierarchy of binary gender categories, then other forms of sexuality,

including homosexuality, have a potential for gender liberation and equality by disturbing the hierarchical binary order.²⁴

I do not wish to argue that the informants who mentioned gay and lesbian rights necessarily agree with Butler's view on gender. Rather, I tend to interpret their mentions of this phenomenon as a sort of an intersectional view, acknowledging the fact that gender inequality cannot be separated from other forms of inequalities, and that the equality on the basis of gender can influence the state of equality in other arenas, too.

When discussing the same sex couple depicted in the Intro book, an interesting exchange of opinions between the two interviewees present took place. One of interviewees showed me the picture of the same sex couple as an illustration of gender equality being discussed throughout the book. The other interviewee reacted to it by saying the book shows an ideal society that 'we would like to have':

"[The ideal society], we are not there. The gay people, they are not allowed everything (...) It's not always an easy life to be gay. It's much better now though [than it was before]."

This interviewee maintained, consistently during the interview, the opinion about the difference between what is presented to the participants of their classes and what are the prevailing sentiments in the mainstream society. It is, again, an example of the comparative miss described by Gressgård and Jacobsen (2002), this time being reflected on by the person who is supposed to represent the 'Norwegian ideal' to the newly arrived immigrants and refugees.

The comparative miss can be considered somehow weakened by the technique a majority of the interviewees claimed to use, and that is describing stories and anecdotes from their own personal life in class in order to illustrate a point about the functioning of the Norwegian society. I would assume that the choice of these stories and anecdotes would be such as to support the official take on any given topic; however, it might still provide a more realistic picture of the Norwegian society.

²⁴ The topic of gender and sexuality is indeed very broad; however, going into further detail is not within the scope of this thesis.

5.4 Gender and ethnicity of street level bureaucrats

When planning the research design I did not intend to include the category of gender and ethnicity of the interviewees into the analytical tool kit as I could not be certain about the diversity of the interview sample. As already mentioned in the methodology chapter, the snowball sampling method I chose in this research appeared to be the only available method and it would be difficult to set gender and ethnicity criteria when selecting interviewees. In spite of my lack of intention to pursue this line of analysis the sample of informants became quite diverse. Six women and two men, people with immigrant background from different countries (Somalia, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Iran, and Ghana) and with background from Norway. Due to the nature of their jobs they all stand to represent Norway and Norwegian values towards the immigrant course participants. Their ethnicity and gender might influence their approach, both to communicating the topic of gender equality and to integration in general.

5.4.1 Gender

The main topic of this thesis is gender equality and I focused on this topic throughout the interviews. I expected to encounter different approaches to gender equality from the men and women I interviewed. Contrary to my expectations I have not been able to identify any significant differences in men's and women's definitions and understanding of gender equality in the group of street level bureaucrats I interviewed. The gender of the informants did not seem to have any significant influence on the way the informants approach the topic of gender equality in their job either, with the exception of male case workers and teachers not being able to participate in female course participants' groups. These female groups are, however, mostly extra-curricular activities as regular classes and courses usually have mixed-gender groups. From the interviews I conducted it appears that the informants' approach to their job tasks is influenced by their ethnicity more than their gender.

5.4.2 Ethnicity

The participants in the Integration scheme come from non-Western countries. Their difference from the majority population is the ‘visible’ one, most often marked by a different skin colour or clothing (Berg and Kristiansen 2010). The interviewees with immigrant background were also ‘visibly different’ owing to their skin colour. Most of street level bureaucrats with immigrant background in my sample mention their immigrant background as an advantage when working with immigrants and refugees for reasons that can be divided into two groups. In the first group there is the interviewees’ personal experience with integration in Norway that provides them with different levels of understanding of the situation of the newly arrived immigrants and refugees as foreigners in an unknown country, and the subsequent insider knowledge of already existing immigrant communities. The concept of empathy is crucial here and empathy needs to be present on both the side of the street level bureaucrats and the course participants. One of the informants with immigrant background said that after a while in Norway, when she became more in control of her life, she started ‘feeling Norwegian’. Her subsequent point about conducting any kind of course in the Introduction scheme is that:

The courses are not just about instructions. You speak about the equality between girls and boys and what is in the law in Norway but mostly you speak about how you feel [about it] (...) Information, book and structure is not enough (...) [the course participants] have to experience [any given topic of the course], then have a room to come with their own ideas and discuss it.

It is necessary to say that the courses that were the topic of our conversation are internationally recognized and certified courses on family life and parenting that the informant, in her capacity of the leader of the refugee and integration service department in her municipality, introduced as mandatory for all Introduction scheme participants. It is then not a method devised by the informant, rather an existing one. However, the choice of the courses and methods reflects her approach to the topic of immigrant integration, and can be understood as mirroring her own personal experience.

In the second group of the advantages immigrant background brings to the work of the interviewed street level bureaucrats, there is a perceived higher level of trust from the course participants and a subsequent improved communication flow. The higher level of trust and feeling of ‘companionship’ can be both helpful and make the work tasks more difficult, depending on the context and the approach the street level bureaucrat takes:

Question: Do you think your immigrant background helps you with your job?

Answer: A lot. But it can be also bad as well. It's a lot easier for them to call me 'hey brother can you do this for me'. And if I say no, they say 'you're a brother, you have to do it'. It's like [it can go] both ways. (...) [On the other hand] I can be a bit loud and say 'no you can't do this and this isn't right' and that person wouldn't take it that bad, while they would take it as very negative thing if one of my colleagues [without immigrant background] would say it.

This quote illustrates the ambivalence of the perceived insider position of a person that is in a position of authority, representing the Norwegian society to the newly arrived immigrants and refugees. It shows that some controversial topics seem to be received better when discussed by someone who is understood as being ‘one of us’, visibly different. The same informant said that he casually discusses the issue of religious tolerance with the Introduction scheme participants, noting that this topic is usually avoided by case workers and teachers with non-immigrant background. I considered his view confirmed when the same topic came up during another interview with two teachers of non-immigrant background, who both confirmed they intentionally do not discuss religion during their classes.

Another teacher with immigrant background said she tries to disentangle what she sees as the false connection between religion and oppression of women. This effort is, according to her own words, perceived as ‘outrageous’ by the course participants, but later accepted:

I could see the behaviour of the women, they restrained themselves, they kept themselves back and I had to challenge the religious aspect of that too because I know the religion doesn't say that. (...) A lot of culture has been

interpreted within the religion (...) [I have a technique to] generate some gender questions [within culture and religion]. I say something very outrageous and they say 'ooh how could you say that' but then, at the end of the day, they would be like 'oh, it makes sense'.

I do not want to claim gender equality to be a controversial topic in the context of the immigrants' culture, and set it on par with questions of religious differences, without reflecting on the position of the topic within the majority culture (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2002, Phillips 2007). However, in the eyes of the street level bureaucrats with immigrant background I interviewed, it is sometimes seen as something they can talk about more openly or approach from a different angle, thanks to the 'visible difference' they share with the immigrants in the course.

If the shared 'visible difference' of a non-white skin colour influences the approach the case workers and teachers take towards the Introduction scheme participants, I could assume the lack of visible difference would also have an influence on the topics the street level bureaucrats choose to discuss and how these topics are communicated to the course participants. Whiteness is supposedly invisible to most white people

because the racialized nature of politics, policing, education and every other sphere of public life is so deeply ingrained that it has become normalized – unremarked, and taken for granted (Gillborn 2006: 319).²⁵

I do admit I did not ask the white interviewees whether their whiteness influences their approach, committing the same omission Gillborn describes in the quote. I have, however, noticed differences and reoccurring ways of approaching the job tasks between the informants with immigrant background and those without immigrant background.

In the interview sample there were four people with immigrant background and four without. Out of the four street level bureaucrats without immigrant background, two have specified their approach to the Introduction scheme participants as the one of authority and guidance. One said "we are supposed to

²⁵ I do not intend to discuss the various approaches to racial issues here; I am using the reference to critical whiteness studies merely to illustrate a point of different approaches of some of the informants.

guide them through their lives” while the other used the words “we know what they need”. These quotes illustrate a certain degree of authority as well as assumption of responsibility for the lives and wellbeing of the scheme participants.

In the situation where non-white people arrive to a predominantly white country and encounter white street level bureaucrats, the whiteness of the public sphere, that under other circumstances is invisible, becomes highlighted. In the notions of some of the interviewed street level bureaucrats themselves, there are two groups that are divided by their immigrant status and thereby by colour, whose interests might be found on opposite sides of any given continuum.

[We say to the participants: ‘this is a compulsory course to attend], you may not realize this yourself now but we know, from experience, this is something really useful to you and will help you in the future (...) we do reach quite far into people’s lives and intervene but we do see in our results that it works. (my emphasis)

We think it’s important that [men and women] get the same program, the same opportunities during the program. Because if we give them too much understanding, sort of, [understanding that] it’s a hard life for women [with children] and work, we think we give them a less good program which will not benefit them in the long run. (my emphasis)

These two quotes can be interpreted as putting newly arrived immigrants’ immediate interests in opposition to the interests of the majority, which will, however, in time become the immigrants’ own interests. Merging the immigrants’ interests with the interests of the majority society signifies a successful integration and appears to be the goal of the integration process, pointing towards the theory of conditional status of non-white people claiming that “the status of black and other minority groups is always conditional upon the approval of whites” (Gillborn 2006: 320).

6. Conclusion

Gender equality is one of the core values of the Norwegian state (and a hallmark of the Scandinavian type of welfare state in general) and an important attribute of the identity of Norwegian citizens (Lister 2009). As such, it can be expected to be a part of the citizen training the newly arrived immigrants and refugees receive. In spite of the importance of gender equality in Norway, both for the Government, and the citizens, there is no unequivocal definition of the concept that would describe the official understanding of gender equality. As a result, people who are responsible for communicating the core Norwegian values to the newly arrived immigrants, draw on their own interpretations of gender equality.

In this thesis I have analysed a variety of official documents concerning integration of newly arrived immigrants and gender equality. By using Bacchi's method of discourse analysis (1999) asking 'what is the problem represented to be?' and employing Goffman's frame analysis (1974), I have shown implied assumptions and problematisations of the topic of gender equality in the context of immigrant integration that differ from the official, intended reading of the analysed documents. The Norwegian state, as represented by the documents I have analysed, appears to focus on paid work as means of achieving not only gender equality but also integration. The Introductory Law and subsequent documents dealing with immigration and integration are following the so-called 'work line' (*arbeidslinja*) (Djuve and Kavli 2007). This reflects the overall societal and political climate at the time of introducing these policies, and shows that the motivation behind these specific integration measures is mainly economic. Behind what I identify as the preferred reading of the official documents, stressing the focus on an individual as an integration agent, and independence as a key indicator of equality, there could be observed an alternative reading showing, often stereotypical, images of the immigrants that shape these policies.

On the one hand, the driving force behind the current version of integration discourse, as represented by the analysed documents, as well as gender equality within that discourse, is economic self-sufficiency – of immigrants and of women. The tools used to integrate immigrants are therefore of a redistributive nature, according to Fraser's dichotomy of redistribution and recognition (1996). On the other hand, the underlying assumptions I detected in these documents appear to be

perpetuating cultural stereotypes about immigrants and thus confirming Fraser's argument that economic redistribution and cultural recognition are often mutually exclusive (ibid.).

In the second part of the thesis I analysed interviews with case workers and teachers working with the Introduction scheme participants and their understanding of gender equality. The analysis shows that to a certain extent the topic of paid work as an important way to achieve equality is present here as well; however, a stronger focus was placed on gender balance in the family and overall work life balance. The understanding of gender equality that the street level bureaucrats communicate to the Introduction scheme participants appears to be slightly different from what the official documents promote as gender equality; influencing the content of the policy that reaches the recipients, the street level bureaucrats act as *de facto* policy makers (Lipsky 2010). The analysis also shows that the definitions of gender equality that the street level bureaucrats apply to themselves are not always considered to be relevant to the life situation of the newly arrived immigrants and refugees, thereby pointing towards the conclusion that personal definitions are not necessarily mirrored in the definitions the street level bureaucrats provide to the course participants.

In the interview analysis I also described my perception of how ethnicity and gender of the interviewees influence their respective approaches to the topic of gender equality and its potential relevance to the course participants. Out of these two factors, ethnicity appears to be the more important one, shaping the ways the informants present the subject of gender equality and how they are, according to the informants' own words, perceived by the course participants.

This thesis provides a complex picture of the problematisation of gender equality in the integration context on several levels of the administration apparatus, comparing understandings of the concept in official policy documents with interpretations of street level bureaucrats who are implementing the policies. Given the size of the samples, both in the document analysis, and the interview analysis, the conclusion I present in the thesis cannot be considered representative of the whole field. Nevertheless, the thesis represents an important contribution to the body of research on the topic of immigrant integration, gender equality, and policy implementation on the street level.

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