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**Family Strengths in the Separation and Reunification of Former Single- Mothers
and their Children: Lived Experiences of Filipina Immigrants in Norway**

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ACRONYM

CFO	Commission on Filipino Overseas
CPS	Child Protection Service
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development {Philippines}
EU	European Commission
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MSWD	Municipal Social Welfare and Development {Philippines}
NAV	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
OFW	Overseas Filipino Workers
POEA	Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
UDI	Norwegian Directorate of Immigration

ABSTRACT

Title: Family Strengths in the Separation and Reunification of Former Single- Mothers and their Children: Lived Experiences of Filipina Immigrants in Norway

Author: Brian Ven C. Bag-ao

Key words: Single- Mother, Filipina Immigrants, Family Resilience, Family Reunification
Family Strengths

The purpose of this research was to build on the scarce knowledge about the strengths of family immigrants. Previous studies concerning their separation and reunification are problem focused. Hence, it emphasized “weak perspectives”. Guided by social work values of valuing family relationship and using strength based perspectives, this study described the family strengths essential in achieving reunification from the immigration separation of former single headed families through the lived experiences amongst Filipina immigrants in Norway. Influx of Filipino immigrants due to family reunification is evident in Norway, thus it would be interesting to understand this phenomenon given the dearth of knowledge which would lead to understand their lived experiences concerning their family strengths.

As an outcome of phenomenological study amongst eight (8) respondents, it was found out that appraisal, communication, initiative, collaborative problem solving, family commitment and social supports (formal and informal) emerged as their strengths essential in achieving reunification and maintaining the reunified families. Abiding with the social constructivist philosophy and using ecological framework, niches of strengths are evident in their narratives. Thus, conclusively, immigrant families, in spite of the challenging life courses, have strengths that made them adapt and maintain to live together. Recommendations of this study pointed out to strengthen inherent family strengths as outcome of interaction within and amongst the family members per se, the community and the larger society. Implication for future research, social work education and personal vision are also given in the later part.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Family – often defined as two or more individuals who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Family means what they ‘do’, rather than heavily relying on the institutional definition on the Family (Morgan, 1999). For the purpose of this study, family is defined by whom the respondents choose to include in their own contexts.

Family reunification - simply means, in Norway context, forming and/or family migration which one is allowed to stay or to be reunited with the family member abroad if the family member who is sponsoring such person, in this study pertains to the child below 18 years of age, constitute and duly approve by the authorities on grounds for family immigration (UDI, 2016).

Family resilience - refers to characteristics, dimensions, and properties of families which help families to be resistant to disruptions in the face of change and adaptive in the face of crisis situation (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988, p. 247 in Van Breda 2001).

Family strengths are the competences and capabilities of family members that are used in response to crises and stress, to meet needs, and to promote, enhance and strengthen the functioning of the family system (Trivette et al. 1990, p. 18 in VanBreda 2001).

Single parenting families- are households consisting of only one parent, bearing with him or her the sole parenting responsibility to his/her children which are dependent. For the purpose of this study, it applies to the former single mother Filipina immigrants.

Transnational family – generally one where core members are distributed in two or more nation states but continue to share strong bonds of collective welfare and unity. It is also a strategic response to the changing social, economic and political conditions of a globalising world (Parreñas, 2001; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Ho, 2002).

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

In Norway, the major groups of family immigrants were from Poland, Lithuania, the Philippines, Somalia and India (IMO Norway, 2005). Research with Filipino families in Norway lags behind despite the fact that Filipino immigration by reason of family reunification is continuously increasing. Given the dearth of research concerning family reunification trajectories of Filipino immigrant in Norway, this study is purposively undertaken to understand how separation to reunification of former single mother Filipina immigrants with their children are experienced. Specifically, it sought to identify what factors that helped them in achieving reunification with their children, maintain the reunion despite the acculturative challenges and stress.

Numerous studies were already conducted about family reunification in immigration context. However, those studies highlighted problems and challenges faced by these families undermining strengths. Hence it became pathological, in its sense, as their results dwell much on socio-psychological ramification. It highlights attachment disruptions and acculturative stress in the context of social integration thus implying weak perspectives of families (see for example Black, 2005; Lopes, 2010; Arnold, 1997; Agyeman, 2004). Reflecting from the evidence-based socio-psychological ramification findings highlighting problems, issues, challenges, risks and massive stress of family reunification in a transnational context, then why family reunification continuously exist as an immigration policy? What are the strengths these immigrant families have in their journey of reunifying?

Guided by strength perspective and ecological framework, this research aimed to shift from the customary ways of problem focused approach to strength approach. Hence, this study sought to surface, understand and describe not the challenges but the strengths that interplayed in the family separation and reunification of immigrant families, in this case, the former single mother Filipina immigrants and their children in Norway. The construct of strengths found in a family, community and the broader contexts tries to examine means by which families managed and developed amidst the challenges. (Allison et. al., 2003; Lietz, 2006, 2007; Patterson, 2002; Thomas et al., 2005; Walsh, 2002 cited in Lietz & Strength, 2010).

The study drew from a total of eight (8) in-depth interviews with the former single Filipina immigrant mothers in regards to the family reunification experience to extract factors that helped them achieved the reunification and in keeping the reunion. Mostly of these former single mothers began their journey in Norway as "au pair" and then found a local or other European national whom eventually they married with or after their "au pair" contract got expired.

1.2 Background of the Study

Filipinos are 'the most globalized workforce on the planet' (Rodriguez 2010, p. 141). According to CFO (2012), there are about 10.45 million Filipino citizens and counting, or about 10% of the

population, who reside, work or already a naturalized citizen in 227 different countries in the whole world. They champion in the contribution in the Philippine national economy amounting to about US\$23 billion in 2013 (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2014). These immigrants not only give strength to the Philippine economy but foremost to their direct family members.

The wide interest in migration has resulted from the growing and deepening links between non-migrants and migrants. The links with migrants can provide information and financial resources to enable aspirants to migrate. Economic analysis shows that the dissemination and sharing of migration information lowers the costs of migration. Social networks in relation to migration are commonly understood as the links between residents in a community of origin and individuals who are living in another place or who previously migrated, regardless of their current residence (Hugo, 1991; Massey, 1990; Massey et al., 1987 cited in Curran and Rivero-Fuentes, 2003). In a family setting, for example, migration seems to pass on from parents to children, motivated by the same desire to improve the family's welfare. For parents, this means to provide a better future for their children. For children, the migration phenomenon for some is seen as a means of providing a comfortable life by their parents.

According to Rodriguez (2010) citing Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) report in 2008, there were 8,233,172.4 estimated Filipino labor migrants around the globe that made it 10% of the total population of Filipinos. Having said that, in a global scale, Philippines is among the major source countries of new immigrants to the traditional settlement countries following the adoption of immigration reforms. Filipinos increased their presence in these countries largely through family reunification with their immediate family members.

In the case of European countries, acquiring residence through employment is possible and is an option that has been taken up by Filipino workers. Although Filipinos started out as migrant workers, mostly in domestic work, in an irregular situation in Italy and Spain, they were able to avail regularization programmes thereby paved the way for them to acquire residency rights. After which, they could bring their immediate family members. In Italy, only 13.5 per cent had become Italian citizens, but many planned to apply for citizenship, especially because they need not abandon their Filipino citizenship (Zanfrini and Sarli, 2010:196 cited in Country Migration Report: The Philippines, 2013).

In Norway, The Immigration Act and the corresponding immigration regulation grant four main residence permit after a thorough individual assessment to the third country nationals, to wit; Labor immigrants, persons who received concrete jobs, persons with close family ties to somebody residing in Norway, students, trainees, au pairs, participants in an exchange program, refugees and other persons who qualify for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds. But in this study, it doesn't include family reunification by reason of refugee or asylum seeking statuses and the like.

Family immigration, which is defined as persons granted residence on the basis of family relations to someone residing in Norway, accounted for 40 percent of the non-Nordic immigration to Norway in the period 1990-2013 (IMO Norway, 2015). On January 1st 2015, the total registered resident population in Norway was 5.165 million and the total foreign citizens registered as resident of Norway was 512, 200. They comprised with 9.9 percent of the total

registered resident population. Amongst these, 290 000 or 56.6 per-cent were citizens of an OECD-country (IMO Norway 2015).

The influx of immigration amongst 11, 200 non-nordic citizens coming from EU member countries was attributed to the reasons of family-ties. The largest group of Asian foreigners were from the Philippines (11 650), Thailand (11 450) and Afghanistan (7 400) (IMO Norway 2015).

Ranging from period 1990-2014, there were 162 000 persons granted for family reunification. Roughly 88, 000 came to establish a new family, mostly through marriage. Of the latter, 55 percent involved a reference person without any immigrant background. In 2014, 15, 300 persons were granted Norwegian citizenship; the highest number ever registered in Norway. With the aforementioned data, Philippines and Myanmar have increased in their number of naturalizations (IMO Norway 2015).

The influx of Filipino people in Norway is expedited by the au pair program. An au pair is defined as an unmarried person, aged 18 to 30 years old, who participates in a cultural exchange program. Council of Europe (1969) in Shultes, (2010) categorizes au pairs as 'neither to the student category nor to the worker' but share a special features of both. This program basically aims to expose au pair to another culture gearing for personal growth. An au pair stays with a host family at par (as equal) and receives an allowance for performing light household chores. In Norway for instance, ministry officials emphasized that this program is for young adult coming from other countries to learn Norwegian culture and society. In return, they will help in the domestic work with no less than 30 hour per week. Economic support for these au pair runs to 5,000 NOK per month. Later in 2012, the immigration policy in Norway regarding au pair restricts those applicants who have children on their own in the countries of origin

In 2014, UDI granted 1,829 *au pair* permits last year and 80 percent went to persons from the Philippines. That's nearly triple the number of Filipinas and Filipinos receiving such permits just six years ago, when 587 persons from the Philippines came to Norway to work as *au pairs* (Berglund 2012). This made them the largest single group of immigrants after those from various European countries who no longer need to apply for residence or work permission. Of those, persons from Poland and Sweden have recently made up the biggest share of immigrants coming to Norway to work. After the contract have expired, many of these immigrants have been married to locals and or other European nationals that gave them the right to enjoy family immigration by reason of reunification.

From 2013 to 2014, out of 16 200 non-Nor-dic persons who arrived in Norway as family immigrants, 12 300, or 76 percent came through family reunification. 3, 900 of the family immigrants came to establish a family, mostly through marriage, and the largest groups in this category were those from Thailand, the Philippines and Poland (IMO Norway 2015).

Bearing from the fluidity of immigration as a phenomenon and the challenges it brings to families and children, personally, as a Filipino master student in University of Stavanger Norway, it rekindled my interest to explore not the challenges but the strengths in the family reunification of single mother Filipina immigrants with their children. Uncovering such strengths would be a major shift from problem focused research study to strengths - based.

1.3 Problem Statements and Research Questions

In spite of the growing population of Filipino in Norway, little is known about their lives as immigrants. Hence, the rationale of the study is driven by the following aspects: 1) Current high rate influx of Filipino immigrants in Norway by reason of family reunification, 2) The dearth of research about Filipino immigrants especially about Filipina single mothers and the reunification with their children in Norway 3) And the existing “pathological -problem focused” research with regards to immigrants thus undermining strengths and resilience perspective

It is well documented that reunification of immigrant families comes with challenges (Arnold, 1997). In the case of single mothers, these challenges are further complicated by the tasks involved in lone parenting. As a result, it is a risk for single mothers to have a daunting work in sole parenting. Because of the relatively long separation, parents often have problems in the reunified relationship (Arnold, 2006). Adjustment difficulties, parental authority, conflicts were identified (Lashley, 2000). When the reunited adolescent become unruly, he/she is being sent and reunited back to the homeland to be taken care of by relatives (Foner, 2009 and Smith, 2006). Pareñas (2001) explained on her study that Filipina migrants decided to send back or leave their children to Philippines due to structural forces of globalization and unequal level of economy between the country of origin and destination.

But given the contention above and stemming from the micro, mezzo, macro problems of immigration focusing on family reunification, i.e, long separation, attachment disruptions, depression, parental conflict over children, acculturation and integration stressors, the foremost question remains, why family reunification continuously exist as an immigration right? What strengths do these families have?

The focus of this study is the family per se duly represented by the former single mothers. It was the prime purpose of this study to build new knowledge by challenging perspectives in research that dwells much on the weaknesses of the families. As such, this study is guided by the research questions on “How do former single-mothers Filipina immigrant in Norway describe their separation and reunification experiences with their child/children? Specific sub-questions were explored hereunder:

- What family strengths interplayed in achieving the reunification of these former single-mother Filipina immigrants and their children?
- How did these strengths contribute to achieve reunification?
- What strengths do these families have? And in what way these strengths helped in keeping the reunion of the family?

1.4 General Objectives

The general objective of this study was :

To explore family’s strengths in the separation and family reunification lived experiences amongst former single-mother Filipina immigrants with their children in Norway.

And the specific objectives were:

- To know what found helpful in achieving reunification after years of separation amongst former single mother immigrant families
- To understand how these family strengths interplayed to achieve reunification despite challenges.
- To identify family strengths that are essential in keeping their family reunion.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope covered the perception of the single-mother Filipina immigrants with regards to factors found helpful in achieving family reunification. Hence, this study focused on the aspects of family that represents strengths perspectives.

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

This research is anchored from the learning outcomes of the Erasmus Mundus European Masters in Social Work with Families and Children program which entices to select and use strength-based strategies in understanding families and children (Johansson, 2015). Further, this study is in line with the core values of social work, that is, to identify and develop strengths amongst, individuals, groups and communities to promote their empowerment (IFSW, 2016).

Rather than emphasizing what has gone wrong, this study gives emphasis on the strengths of immigrant families as they interact within and outside their context. By way of saying family strengths inspired by the ecological model of Bronfrenbrenner (1986), it pertains to the dynamics that played in the family, their peer groups, communities and the wider contexts deemed essential in facing adversities by means of securing protective factors interactionally (please note that the ecological framework is discussed thoroughly in the next chapter). Hence, the purpose is to attain deeper knowledge concerning family strengths and resilience.

In this research, it provides understanding of the strengths and resilience contributory to the successful outcomes of family reunification from the perspective of the former single mother Filipina immigrants. Contrary to focus on risks and deficits, the strengths perspective seeks to find out protective factors, assets, and capabilities a family possesses to improve functioning (DeFraim & Asay, 2007; Dunst & Trivette, 2009; Early & GlenMaye, 2000; Saleebey, 2006 cited in Lietz, & Strength, 2011). In this sense, available knowledge would not only seek to find out what factors impede reunification but should be balanced with factors contributory to what worked out as achievable outcomes in a transnational family reunification context.

This study leads to raise family voice as this research gathered from the perspective of the former single headed family immigrants that may lead to meaningful and richer data (Kauffman, 2007). Hence, providing avenue for family's voice is a step for a family-centered practice hastening collaboration and empowerment (Alpert, 2005; Coleman & Collins, 1997; Dumbrill, 2006 cited in Lietz & Strength, 2011).

In hindsight, previous researches remain problem focused which tend to become less attuned to know factors contributory to achieving reunification. Problematic child-parent relationship has been the focus of many immigrant families studies (Lashley, 2000; Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese 1995; Hilarie, 2008; Suarez-Orozco et.al. all in Schapiro et.al, 2013). Hence, the aforementioned justification is being given more weight and in depth explanation of why this research centered on positive outcomes in the context of the lived experiences of family immigrants.

On important note, this study hopes to bring relevance to the immigration policies and social services agencies in the Philippines and also in Norway. Particularly to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas which function is to provide welfare and cultural services that promote economic, political and cultural activities. It also facilitates integration of migrants in host country. Also, this study would help to provide services to Filipino immigrants who are in process of family reunification. Eyeing child protection services to develop and/or enhance programs and services for parents who are separated due to immigration and who are in process of family reunification.

Gearing to facilitate integration process in the mainstream of Norway's way of life. Family centered support to immigrant parents who are in family separation and reunification is believed to be of relevance and helpful. And for social worker to be guided with the strengths and resilience framework in working with the service users.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises the literature review following theoretical framework in the later part. This gives an overview of what family reunification is all about. Its meaning and entitlement as to why family reunification is part of immigration policy. An overview on European context and Norway is given. Relevant studies concerning family reunification are also explored with their key findings and how these studies contributed to the significance of understanding the phenomenon and the gap of the existing literature to give justification with regards to the relevance of this research.

Below, I also present a snapshot of Filipino family identity and an overview of family reunification as part of European immigration policy specifically in Norway. It is being followed by a number of evidence-based studies of family reunification highlighting family weakness perspectives with some of the evidenced based studies that dwell on strength and resilience of families. These key findings of the studies are arranged into micro, mezzo and macro levels to be guided with different challenges faced by families as seen contextually.

Guided with the whole idea of research, I did a mind mapping and searched Social Services Abstract Pro Quest (ProQuest), Scopus, Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), Annual Review database, LIBRIS, Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB), Google Scholar using the term “immigrant families”, “separation of immigrant families”, “reunification of immigrant families”, “Filipino immigrants”, impact of “family migration”, “family strengths”, family resilience of immigrants”, “successful family reunification and the like. These online search engines helped me to narrow my research questions after understanding the researches found. Source of such include but not limited to peer reviewed journals, master’s and doctoral dissertations using qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods study design. Reflecting on these, below are the studies made with regards to separation and reunification of immigrant families.

2.2 Background of Filipino Family Identity

Nye (1967) in Morillo et.al (2013) made mention that it is important to understand the value system of a family to understand individual’s intrinsic values that also serves as a grounding understanding of groups of people. Despite the influence of western culture brought by the country’s history, Filipino families embrace its distinctive characteristics. Amongst those are family centeredness, having large family size with close family ties, sense of reciprocity and child centric (Medina, 2001; Miralao, 1994 all in Murillo et.al., 2013).

The distinctive characteristics of familism of the Filipino families even extends to the relational kinship structure. Members of the family usually attribute familial name as a gesture of respect and a description that one belongs to a family by a common regard of naming for respect for elders as, *tatang* (father), *nanay* (mother), *kuya* (older brother), *manang* (older sister), *lola* (grandmother), *lolo* (grandfather), *tita* (aunt). Considering the importance of godmother/father,

they regarded as *ninang*. *ninong*, while in laws are being termed as *bilas*, *bayaw* or *manugang*. Living arrangements of Filipino families extend to parents and child or just parents, even in laws, and even cousins (Medina, 2001 in Morillo et.al., 2013.) This might not be usual for western culture, but Filipino children are not obliged, not unless they want to, to live by themselves in order to keep the family intact and their close relationship.

The Filipino family is said to be a patriarchal model. The father is expected to be the bread winner of the family, although there are emerging sociological studies which state that Filipino families are moving from patriarchal to egalitarian concept of family where the mother has also vested authority and even encouraged to augment the income of the family (Morillo et.al., 2013). The normativity of the institutional definition of family in the Philippines still lies in embracing heteronormativity. Having said that, a debate about what the family is and what the family ought to be became emerging. As an old school definition and conception, family is composed and should be heterosexual in nature founded on marriage and is residing in a domicile. Strong families are, of course, seen as conjugal, heterosexual partners with an employed male breadwinner.

As majority of people hold a moral standard imbedded in a value system that surrounds sexual, gender and family practice. Given such restrictive standards, unconventional lone mother and gay couple, couples without children and people living on their own for a variety of reasons do not by definition constitute strong families in assumption. Such judgment also is seen amongst absent mothers to care their children as "deviant cases" as being treated as broken due to distance (Parreñas, 2001).

Reflecting and in relation to the restrictive definition of family above, it is with this notion that family fluidity might be recognized through seeing in a different lens and from different perspectives. Morgan (1999) for instance states that family means what they 'do', rather than heavily relying on the institutional definition on the Family.

"In this alternative approach, family is to be seen as less a noun and more of an adjective or, possibly, a verb. 'Family' represents a constructed quality of human interaction or an active process rather than a thing-like object of detached social investigation" (Morgan, p.16, 1999).

In the context of social constructivism, the family practice involved the social actors who define themselves and their activities in their socio-cultural context. This means that such definition of family is fluid as its members (re)constitute in its dynamics as they negotiate roles and keep the relationship in their course. Given the context, transnational families seek to consider their phenomenon as they negotiate family relation in a transnational space

2.3 Family Reunification: An Overview in Europe and Norway

Due to the influx of immigration, the right to family life is a fundamental right that has attained comprehensive protection in international law. It is guaranteed in the Articles 12 and 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and Article 9

of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (Morris, 2014). The EU Member States have created a right to family reunification for third-country nationals residing legally in the European Union (Wiesbrock, 2011 cited in Staver, 2013). For this, it is rooting in several conventions and treaties between and amongst states that signed and ratified with relevance to their respective migration policies. (Battistella 1995; Cholewinski 2002; Groenendijk 2006 cited in Bonizzoni 2009).

It has been said that the foremost mode of legal entry into European countries for the past two decades has been through family related migration (Lahav, 1997; Sopemi, 2000 cited in Koffman 2004). But this definition seems to be restrictive and limiting as the definition of family normally constitute within the nuclear form limited to the spouses and children below 18 of age. Hence, immigrant themselves cannot decide who constitute their family. Therefore, it doesn't give much consideration to the relative and pluralistic construct of the definition pertaining what family is and who constitute therein. But in Italy, their immigration policy for family reunification extends to allow parents and siblings to be given an entry. This makes their policy more or less generous compared to the other European states. And only few countries, like Scandinavia, the Netherlands, UK, allow same –sex couples in the destination country to form a family (Koffman, 2004).

The directives give a discretion to EU Member states allowing to give standards in relation to impose minimum age, proof of considerable resources as well as integration requirements to the third country nationals who wished to be joined by a family member in the destination EU member states (Wiesbrock, 2011 cited in Staver, 2013). For example, a minimum age limit, income requirement, suitable accommodation, sickness insurance are set. For some EU Member states, the Directive allows for 'integration measures to require a demonstrations of some language proficiency in DUTCH with reference to THE Netherlands (Staver, 2013). Family reunification is usually a means of realizing the right to family life (Anderfuhren-Wayne, 1996 in Staver, 2013.). Hence, putting such restrictions deny such right as argued by the human right activists. Staver (2013) claimed that there is no general right to family reunification in international law.

International Migration Organization Norway (2015) states that immigration is the process of legally moving in Norway with the intention to stay with 6 months or more and is registered in Central Population Register. Immigration by reason of family reunification is the major route of immigration to Norway (Norges Offentlige Utredninger (NOU), 2004 in Myrdal, 2010). Family immigration is classified into two groups, to wit: those whose new family is to be established and those to be reunited with the members of the family. According to IMO (2015), the number of family reunification with family members in Norway has increased while the family establishment has remained stable. In this regard, we have differentiated the difference of family establishment between family reunification of members as reasons for family immigration. In this study, the researcher sought to explore the factors that brought positive outcomes in the family reunification of former single-mother Filipina immigrants with their children in Norway.

UDI explains that family immigration is also called family reunification or forming a family. It simply means that one is allowed to stay or to be reunited with the family member abroad if the family member who is sponsoring such endeavor has a Norwegian or Nordic citizenship or a

residence permit constituting grounds for family immigration. Close family members are considered to be the spouse of the registered partner, fiancée, cohabitant who have lived together for at least two years, cohabitant who are expecting a child together, children under 18 years of age whose parents live in Norway, parental visit for up to 9 months and other family members under strong humanitarian consideration.

Since this study concerns about the reunification of former single mother Filipina immigrants who have been living in Norway, with a reunified child under 18 as an experience, understanding immigration requirements is essential. The parent who lives in Norway should produce a proof of the sole parental responsibility to the child (UDI, 2016). Another requirement would be a statement with emphasis on the applicant's situation of care in the country of residence stating therein the information about the current care provider with attached proof of identity.

UDI explains that aside from the aforementioned necessary requirements above about parental authority, the sponsor or the parent living in Norway must satisfy a subsistence (income) requirement of at least NOK 252 472 a year (88 percent of civil service pay grade 19) as of May 2015. This would mean that the reference person would be able to meet the income requirement for the period for which the application applies usually for one year. Hence, the parent as reference person can provide documentation from the latest tax assessment showing that he or she satisfied the income requirement during the previous year. And he or she has not received financial support or qualification benefit from the social services during the last 12 months.

In the parlance of family reunification due to immigration, literature of this study basically pertains to two main characteristics. First, parents who go abroad in countries which reunification is not permitted, they go home every now and then to reunify with the family. Second, most parents who are working abroad hope to bring their family members abroad for the promise of better life after complying the legalities of the immigration requirements. And this study is in accordance with the latter characteristics of family reunification.

2.4 Evidence-Based " Problem Focused" Studies Concerning Separation and Reunification Of Immigrant Families

Studies that dwell on the separation of the immigrant families center on the impact to children through their respective parental migration can be found in the works of Aguilera –Guzan et.al 2004; Abrego, 2009; Avila, 2009; Dreby, 2007; Jia and Tian, 2010; Jia et.al, 2010; Liu et.al 2009; Parreñas, 2005; Potinger, 2005; Pribilsky, 2007; Wen & Lin. 2012 all in Schapiro et.al, 2013

With relevance to the reunification of immigrant families in transnational context studies are made by Arnold, 2006; Artico, 2001; Black, 2005; Glasgow and Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Hine-St. Hilarie, 2008; Hernandez, 2009; Ko and Perreira, 2010; Kotuby, 2003; Lam.et al., 2005; Lashley 2000; Rosseau et.al., 2009; Smith et.al, 2004; Suarez- Orozco, Todorova & Louie, 2002; Suarez-Orozco et. al., 2008; Suarez- Orozco et. al., 2011 all in Schapiro et.al, 2013.

Much of the studies conducted, basing from their key findings, are challenges and problems that impact the children of immigrant parents that stem from the separation and reunification experiences. (Arnold, 1997; Coll and Vasquez, 1995 all in Agyeman, 2004). Acculturation process in various levels affects the functioning of the immigrant families (Baker, 2001; Congress, 1997 cited in Agyeman, 2004) and disruptions of attachments bonds and other parenting issues (Black, 2005). To give coherence to my literature review, I would like to categorize these studies into micro, mezzo, macro problem focused studies.

Such concepts (micro, mezzo, macro) are borrowed from the ecological framework of Bronfenbrenner (1986). Using such concepts as a category to present the evidenced based studies of separation and reunification of immigrant families, micro problem focused studies concern on the psychological ramification in separation and reunification. The mezzo level concerns about studies of family reunification with immigrants families focusing on intrafamilial and other social relationships. And the last but not the least, those studies that have bearing in a more structural level that is problem posing in the pursuit of family reunification. These concepts of Bronfenbrenner are explained in the later part of this chapter.

2.4.1 Micro Category – Findings on Psychological Ramification and Attachment Issues

Pareñas (2001) explained that the transnational mothers feel much of guilt, emotional deep-seatedness of being lonely. In the mixed method study of Suarez- Orozco, Todorova & Louie, (2002), they found out that children who are separated from their parents exhibit depressive symptoms in comparison with those children who are not separated. The qualitative data from the parents, teachers, youth's perspective with regards to separation and reunification supplemented the circumstances and context lead to variety of outcomes.

In another quantitative study of Suarez- Orozco, Bang & Kim (2011), the analyses show that in the initial years after the parents have migrated, anxiety and depression were reported but abated after 5 years. In relation to the psychological ramification between the separation of the mother-children and father-children of the same study, it was found out that children who were separated from their mothers for 4 years showed symptoms of anxiety and depression in the first year in comparison to those children who experienced no separation to their mothers. Low levels of depression and anxiety in one year than those who experienced medium-long term separations are found to those children who experienced short term or no separation with their fathers. Whereas, those who are separated with their mothers for long reported high level of the same depressive symptoms.

Withstanding to the aforementioned acculturation challenges and issues, attachment problems between the biological parent and the reunited children, conflict that arise in parenting adjustment and the like are mentioned (Arnold, 1997; Suarez-Orozco, Todorova & Louie, 2002). Some of the studies made mentioned of the "ambiguous attachment loss". Hence, migration separation results first with the parent and then later disruption from the caretaker (Suarez-Orozco, Todorova & Louie, 2002). It means then that the first time the biological mother left to migrate, there was a disruption in the biological attachment and then when this child is being reunited in the destination country another attachment disruption would happen to the primary

caregiver who takes care of the child (Black, 2005; Dreby, 2007). This is also supported in the case of single immigrant mothers in Canada at times of their reunification of their children, experiences of difficulties in attachment relationships were interpreted (Agyeman, 2004).

The feeling of anxiety was experienced by children and youth who left their comfort zones in the country of origin like their friends, extended families and the like and the feeling of mixed emotions to be reunited with the biological parents who have been far away from each other was found (Black, 2005). Reunited children often feel ambivalence in the migratory reunification (Rousseau et al., 2009; Sciarra, 1999). In the study of Latino youth in USA, children with new family members reported lower self-esteem compared to children being reunified with intact families (Hernandez, 2013).

2.4.2 Mezzo Level – Problem Focused Studies on Interpersonal or Familial Context

Adjustment difficulties, parental authority and conflicts were identified (Lashley 2000 as cited in Black, 2004). Agyeman (2004) described that most of the single immigrant mothers in Canada lack physical and psychological preparations for the child reunification. Hence, it leads to parenting problem. Suarez- Orozco, Bang & Kim (2011) made mentioned that during the onset of reunification, the feeling of meeting a stranger was commonly felt by the children. The feeling of being disoriented also emerged in their findings. Withstanding to these are the problems on re-establishing authority and coming to terms with new family members. Parenting becomes a problem, the case of single mothers in Canada during reunification with their children had dilemma in disciplining their children as their normative way of using stick to spank a child in not permissible in Canadian society which may permit to the involvement of child protective services (Agyeman, 2004).

The author elucidated that mostly adolescents have more difficulty to adapt entirely to the new family constellation (Suarez- Orozco et. al, 2011). Both parents and youth as participants in the study frequently noted of the discomfort living with step parent or new or step siblings as a matter of adjustment (Suarez-Orozco et. al, 2011). Competition with the siblings being born in the destination country for the attention of the mother was documented amongst reunified children (Arnold, 2006). This kind of blended families' experience was also documented in the study of Mexican and Central American families, that any family members' i.e. children born out of unions played complexity in the reunification (Lopez, 2010).

Moreover, because of the relatively long separation, parents often have problems in the reunified relationship (Arnold, 2006; Sewell-Coker, Hamilton-Collins, & Fein, 1985 all in Suarez-Orozco et. al., 2011). In the correlational analyses found in the study of Hernandez (2013), it was found out that age of reunification and length of separation have something to do with the perceived difficulties in the relationship.

With so much frustration, parents reported that their financial and emotional sacrifices are not compensated by their children (Abrego, 2009; Dreby, 2009). The same sentiments by the parents of unrequited sacrifice was noted in the study Suarez- Orozco, Bang & Kim (2011). Hence, long years of separation means threat to unwilling confirmation to the parental rules (Smith, Lalonde,

& Johnson, 2004; Hernandez, 2013). And the portrayal of parental authority is felt with guilt that may result in being inconsistent and overindulged, (Arnold, 1991; Burke, 1980 cited in Suarez-Orozco et.al, 2011). When the reunited adolescent become unruly, he/she is being sent and reunited back to the homeland to be taken care by relatives (Foner, 2009; Smith, 2006 cited in Suarez-Orozco et.al 2011). This holds true to younger children, they are being sent back to be cared for by extended family while parents work (Bohr, Whitfield, & Chan, 2009; Gaytan, Xue, & Yoshikawa, 2006 all in Suarez-Orozco et.al, 2011).

2.4.3 Macro Level – Problem Focused Studies on Structural Levels

Much of the studies cited have a twang on problems regarding acculturation/integration. On process of reunification, immigration policies contribute to the long separation of the family members (Bonizzoni, 2009).

Agyeman (2004) found that most social integration challenges identified were culture shock, weather and food adjustment. In the Unites States of America, evidence consistent with the premise that laws of immigration affect the formation, composition and structure of immigrant families with consequences (Enchautegui & Menjívar, 2015).

Bonizzoni (2009) states that the affidavit of support also hinders smooth reunification. US citizens and legal permanent residents, who serve as petitioner, must submit an affidavit that they are capable of supporting the person to be reunified. Financial capability so as not to be dependent from the government must be proven. Hence, financial instability serves as a major concerns in the success of family reunification (Bonizzoni, 2009). The length of separation of the immigrants in the USA and their loved ones in the pursuit of family reunification could be related in the long waiting of visa allocations (Enchautegui & Menjívar, 2015). It is attributed to the lack of staff to process the application in the immigration (Landale, Thomas & Hook, 2011) and the set annual caps which determine as to how many are allowed to be given residence permit per year as part of the immigration policy which contributes to the long separation of children and parents. This is designed to prevent domination of immigration flows from single countries to USA (Landale et. al, 2011).

Landale, Thomas and Hook (2011), for example, stated that in the case of Mexican immigrants in USA, residency status of parents impacts their children. Due to being unauthorized parents to stay, they have low wage jobs that have no health benefits. They do so because of the fear of being recognized as undocumented immigrants (Landale et.al, 2011). It is said that Mexican children of unauthorized parents are poorer in comparison to other Mexican migrants. Sometimes women had to lie about their status that they are single mothers or marital status per se for the purpose of obtaining residence permit with the end view of declaring it once they have a work contract and the subjective feeling of being secure that can give them the opportunity to live in the host country and reunify with their children (Arat Koc and Giles, 1994 as cited in Agyeman, 2004). But that is not always the case, as there was an incident with a Jamaican women in Canada that were deported for applying sponsorship of previously undeclared children (Bakan and Stasilius, 1997 as cited in Agyeman, 2004).

Pareñas (2001) states that many Filipina migrants domestic helpers in USA, Canada and Italy have problems in the sponsorship for their children as their domestic work seems to be difficult to balance. She explained in her study that Filipina immigrants decided to send back or leave their children to Philippines due to structural forces of globalization and unequal level of economy between the country of origin and destination.

Stemming from the previous studies mentioned, awareness of the risks, challenges, problems and stress factors in the separation and reunification of immigrant families should not only be the focus of researches concerning family reunification. Hence, a more balanced approach should lead researchers to seek understanding of the factors that help families reunified.

2.5 Evidence Based Separation and Reunification Studies of Immigrants: Strengths in Their Key Findings

In contrast to a focus on risks and deficits, the strengths perspective seeks to uncover and mobilize the protective factors, assets, and capabilities a family possesses to improve functioning (DeFraim & Asay, 2007; Dunst & Trivette, 2009; Early & GlenMaye, 2000; Saleebey, 2006 in Raffaelli & Wiley, 2012). Individual's ability to rebound from difficulty or challenges has been studied as factors of resilience and the notion of resilience is explored in a context of family system by way of understanding their ways of managing challenges and/or difficulties and maintain functioning (Allison et al., 2003; Lietz, 2006, 2007; Patterson, 2002; Thomas et al., 2005; Walsh, 2002 in Raffaelli & Wiley, 2012).

Despite the dominance of problem focused key findings in the studies of family separation and reunification cited above, there are few studies that also include strengths or resilience in the course of separation and reunification. Several identified factors helpful in achieving the family reunification after years of separation and in keeping the reunion of the immigrant families despite acculturative challenges are also mentioned but not highlighted in the previous literature.

According to Hernandez (2013), in order for children not to oppose the plan for the reunification, they must understand the phenomenon of separation and the reasons why separation takes place. Parents and surrogate caregivers must explain and help the children to understand such (Artico, 2003; Orellana et al., 2001 cited in Hernandez, 2013). When parents, despite distance, made frequent visits to children in the country of origin may have impact in the positive relationships of a parent and a child (Smith et al., 2004). In the study made amongst Latino adolescents in United State of America, it was found out that it was normative in the adaptation for them to feel and see their parents as strangers at first but eventually as time went on they began to adapt and acknowledged their mothers (Hernandez, 2013).

The concept of familismo (i.e. interconnectedness, family obligation and roles) is found amongst several studies. It served to buffer the negative effects of separation especially amongst children who are left behind. The social support of extended family may bring confidence of the immigrant parents about leaving the children. In such society, where kinship care is practiced, it is but culturally appropriate (Zayas & Solari, 1994 cited in Hernandez, 2013). When children are accustomed towards this kind of arrangement, they are expected to understand that the sacrifices

made by their parents are geared for themselves and the family at large (Artico, 2003 cited in Hernandez 2013).

Making the children understood that separation is temporary would basically ease the impact to the children and help them cope (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Lopez, 2010). Hence, to be taken cared of surrogate parents by means of kinship care may be viewed as normal (Lashley, 2000; Pottinger, 2005 as cited in Hernandez, 2013). With this view, it gives additional understanding amongst scholars who state that the loss of the primary caregiver may not be as traumatic as it seems because multiple attachments occur which other members of the family can effectively attend to children's needs (Jones et al., 2004; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002 cited in Hernandez, 2013). Lopez (2010) critiqued that attachment theory is narrowly focused on a mother and child dyad and has not addressed the role of extended families in the provision of needs of the children left by immigrant parents. She added that the availability of an extended family network may buffer against the effect to the children due to maternal deprivation.

Immigrant families have many strengths. In the study of Mexican immigrants in the USA, high levels of marriage and commitment to family life are some of these (Landale, Thomas and Hook 2011). Despite the difficulties of the single immigrant mothers in Canada, they persisted and expressed hope for a better future with their children in Canada and spending quality time with their children when reunified to cope the loss (Ageyman, 2004).

Bonizzoni (2009) highlighted that the extended ties is a form of concrete support for immigrant couples, single mother/father in the separation and reunification of the family members/relatives. Family relatives then became one of the means of support in the whole procedural process of family separation and reunification in the form of managing care and money transnationally. When both parents migrate, often the children are in care of the extended families such as grandmothers, aunts, uncles or even the father when only the mother goes abroad. (Bernhard, Landolt, & Goldring, 2006; Foner, 2009; Scalabrini Migration Center, 2003 cited in Suarez-Orozco, 2011).

In reunification, there are factors that are challenging, however, the immigrant parents can adapt positively by preparing the reunification. Parents must know the difficulty it may bring to children in the reunification when they are being separated from the care giver so that these immigrant parents can be sensitive to the difficulty (Sciarra, 1999 in Lopez, 2010). By remaining physically and emotionally available, it can help the reunification adjustment. When children know that their parents are present, feelings of abandonment can be waned (Lopez, 2010).

Perceived family support was also helpful in the reunification experience of young Chinese immigrants in Hongkong. Accordingly, with family support, they were able to overcome difficulties, became mature and more independent (Lam, Chan & Tsoi, 2005). It was made mentioned in the narratives of these young Chinese immigrants that the support during reunification was not only in material provision but also emotional ones (Lam et.al, 2005). Another equally important strengths found helpful in the relative success of family reunification is the sense of gratitude towards parents by these young Chinese immigrants. With a grateful heart for the sacrifices made by their parents, these reunified young Chinese immigrants felt the obligation to behave well (Lam et.al, 2005).

Reunited families of immigrants with legal status have greater access to economic, education to newly arrived children, community health centers and supports for parents in this case are factors of strengths and resilience (Lopez, 2010). Employment related opportunities were also found out as one of those. One cannot survive the demands of living if parents of reunited children have no work.

In the success of reunification, sometimes the employer helps the domestic employee in acquiring the necessary documents such as housing contracts just to satisfy the requirement and even Italian employer gave support by advising to go to an NGO they know who help facilitates immigrants concerns. Italian employer also become co-organizer of the reunification. Hence, it becomes one of their strengths as informal support (Bonizzoni, 2009). Lone mothers, as working all day, sought help from their sisters and friends to take care of the child/children while she is away or asking children to manage of taking care of themselves (Bonizzoni, 2009). Thus, relatives and friends become a source of strength and the concept of 'independent-adult children' is a matter of social construction because of structural constraints. It means then that there are children at 10 years of age going to school alone, and there are children being taken at work with the lone mother or being left at home for many hours alone (Bonizzoni, 2009). Agyeman (2004) mentioned that part of the coping strategies of the immigrant lone mothers were loving and listening to children and involvement to Christian groups as a means of support.

In the study of Lopez (2010), the presence of significant social network or social support within family and outside systems such as kin, church organizations, neighborhoods and friends influences factors of family resilience (Walsh, 2012). Personal networks, for example refers to the Latino community which provides warmth and cohesion whereas formal resources refer to government and non-government assistance which are referred to as public assistance (Raffaelli & Wiley, 2012).

2. 6 Gaps in the Literature

If the available literatures above have been entrenched to highlight negative consequences as impacts to family members living in a transitional context then why, despite its negative impact to immigrant families, still family reunification has remained as a right to family life and continuously part of immigration policy?

This study aimed to be in lineage with transnational families but departing to be specific and focused on the less researched dynamics of family reunification. As previously mentioned above, most of the available family reunification researches are highlighting challenges and problems which focused on the socio-psychological ramification impact of separation and reunification. These challenges and problems can be categorized then as attachment disruptions, acculturation processes and the adjustment of new social relationships in the intra-familial level. Hence, would be in away pathogenic.

Family in itself is fluid, thus transnational families do not remain transnational forever, immigration policy concerning family reunification is essential to fulfill the right to family life.

Trying to link to very few researches devoted to family reunification (see for instance Adams 2000; Artico, 2003; Bernhard, 2005; Creese et al., 1999; Lashley, 2000 cited in Bonnizoni, 2009), this study adds to the existing literature. Family reunification studies concentrated much on the immigrant family as a whole where, most likely, husband comes after the wife for family establishment and then when desired requirements are met, children follow. I personally believed that studying the family reunification endeavor of a former single mother immigrant in a welfare state, like Norway, is interesting as I dwell on the family strengths that have helped them in achieving the reunification and maintaining the family reunion.

The only study that I can possibly link as more or less relatively close is the study made by Agyeman (2004) concerning the reunification experience of immigrant single mothers and their children in Canada. But relating to study to the previous researches, I argue that much of the key findings highlight socio-psychological ramifications of attachment disruptions and acculturation challenges and problems. The findings related to informal support networks as a source of resource and other strengths mentioned seem to be deficient to capture and zoom in the interplay and roles of micro, mezzo, macro resources. Another quantitative study, more or less, closer to this was with challenges and strength of Latino families in Rural Midwest United States of America (Raffaelli & Wiley, 2012). But it lacks the depth and extent on how these challenges were experienced and the factors that subjectively gave impact in the family reunification were in superficial.

Again, it has been mentioned in the previous chapter that research with Filipino families in Norway lags behind despite the fact that the number of immigration by reason of family reunification is continuously increasing. Further, given the dearth of research surrounding the family reunification trajectories of single-parent immigrant Filipino families in Norway, it was the purpose of this study to explore how reunification of former single Filipina mothers with their children are experienced. Specifically, to identify the factors that play essential role to manage and achieve the reunification and to find out what family strengths do they have in keeping the reunion?

By means of saying maintaining family reunification, it would mean then in this study, the children and youth being reunified have never been subjected to child protection services in Norway, did not commit truancy in school and any misdemeanor recorded by the police, did not return home in the Philippines due to problematic adjustment or acculturation process and the family is subjectively doing well as perceived by the respondents.

As this study sought to capture the positive factors contributing to achieve family reunification of former single Filipina immigrant mothers with their children. The key findings of this study would be an additional literature of family strengths and/or resilience in the context of transitional immigrant families in their separation and reunification. Hence, it leads to the research questions on the factors found helpful in achieving reunification and keeping the reunion.

2.7 Philosophical and Theoretical Framework

2.7.1 Social Constructionism

As this study uses phenomenology as an approach, it abides with the philosophical view of social constructivism. According to Cresswell (2007), social constructivism is combined with interpretivism (see Mertens, 1998 cited in Cresswell 2007). It is with this worldview that individuals context is understood as they subjectively give meaning in their experiences. Hence, it is the prime consideration that researchers should take into account as much as possible the context of participants' situation. In other words, human beings construct their subjective reality stemming from their historical and social contexts which matter in their interpretation.

Ritchie et.al (2014 p. 12) explain the salient points of interpretivism and constructionism, to wit:

- Based from the participants account, researchers construct meanings and interpretations.
- By focusing on their meanings and interpretation, knowledge is produced by means of exploring thier social world.
- As interpretation is grounded on data, this way of knowing is largely inductive in nature.
- By studying the social world, natural sciences are not appropriate because the social world is not law like governed regularities. Hence, governed by meaning.
- Competing and relative perception and understanding of social reality governed the perception of this school of thought.

2.7.2 Strength Perspective

In this study, strength-based approach is conceptualized in two way. Firstly, is to identify protective factors assets, resources and abilities which were helpful in the family that could be enhanced . And secondly, is to describe strengths by means of service provision.

Over the past three decades, researchers have studied families from a strengths-based perspective. The emphasis on family strengths brings balance on how family overcome life's challenges. By giving emphasis on the problems families are facing, society tends to ignore the positivity of the positive outcome families went through in any life's adversities. The strength perspective was coined by the forerunner to give due recognition to strengths of people. This becomes an approach to social work practice began in the early 1980s at the University of Kansas' School of Social Welfare (Saleeby, 2008). This perspective is an attempt to put an equal footing as response to the traditional deficit-focused social work approach.

Saleeby (1997, pp. 12-15) has described several principles in strengths perspective, the following are : 1) Every individual, group, family and community has its strength, 2) Trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity, 3) Assume that you do not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change and take individual, group, and community aspirations seriously, 4) We best serve clients by collaborating with them, 5) Every environment is full of resources.

Saleebey (2006, p.10) defines client's strengths through three interlinked aspects, called "CPR". C represents competence, capacities and courage; P stands for promise, possibility, and positive expectations; and R means resilience, reserves, and resources. It becomes an orientation that magnifies resources, capabilities, support systems in overcoming adversities and challenges. It enables the practitioner approach clients with a positive attitude aims to enhance motivation and hope. By this, the role of language is extremely important in the strengths-approach. Language and words have power. Words can lift and inspire or frighten and constrain. It is with the language that a researcher also can uncover strengths.

Departing from the traditional deficit approaches, the strength perspective comes in detour to emphasize the resources, capacities, energies and survival skills of people rather than of highlighting pathologies and problems (Saleebey, 2006; Payne, 2014). Therefore, it captures the premise that all people have inherent strengths in the transformation of their lives from its adversities.

Berg & Kelly (2000) emphasized that strength perspective is in accordance with social work values of human rights, inclusion and social justice, participation, equality, non-discrimination and respect for diversity. The strength perspective serves as an overarching pieces in the emerging professional backgrounds such as in psychology, social work, anthropology, sociology, etc. Saleebey (1996) often refers this to the concept of health and wholeness, resilience, empowerment, narratives and the like.

2.7.3 Ecological framework

The overarching Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological framework is used in this study. This framework has been used for risk and resilience by numerous researchers. As emphasized in this study, this is used to describe resilience and family strengths in the course of their transnational reunification. Such framework invites to understand the socio-ecological milieu of family, school, neighborhood, community services, and dynamics of culture as influential source of strengths (Walsh, 2012).

Following Bronfenbrenner (1986 p.188 in Johnson, 2008), he states that human development follows a progression throughout the life course as active, dynamics with changing properties in the context where the person lives. Its basic premise, Bronfenbrenner, (1979) in Berk, (2000) explained about the interconnected systems namely, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem. The first one concerns about the interactions of the immediate surroundings of the focal system or the relationship interpersonally in a particular setting. Mesosystem, concerns about the structures and linkages of microsystems. The exosystem covers the broader structure like policies within the context that affect the interplay with other system, example in this case, immigration policies. The macro system speaks about the values, customs, social resources that may directly affect the focal system as an entity of explanation. Finally, is the chronosystem. It explains how socio-historical context, affected by time dimension, affects the interrelationship.

2.7.3.1 Family Resilience

Walsh (2012) describes family resilience as the family's potential for recovery, repair, and growth in facing challenges. By using this lens, we shift by seeing the immigrant families not as damaged because of separation but as challenged with potentialities to recover. The concept of family resilience captures beyond seeing resilience as an inherent capacity of individuals (i.e. age, intellectual capacity and the like). Hence, it focuses on the risk and resilience factors as a functional unit (Walsh, 2012). It puts on the premise of key dynamics properties that also interplay when family is faced with challenges.

Family resilience is defined by several scholars:

- It refers to the positive behavioral patterns and functional competence individual and the family unit demonstrate under stressful or adverse circumstances, which determine the family's ability to recover by maintaining its integrity as a unit while ensuring, and where necessary restoring, the wellbeing of family members and the family unit as a whole (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988, p. 247 in Van Breda, 2001).
- It describes the path a family follows as it adapts and prospers in the face of stress, both in the present and over time. Resilient families respond positively to these conditions in unique ways, depending on the context, developmental level, the interactive combination of risk and protective factors and the family's shared outlook (Hawley & De Haan, 1996, p. 293 in Van Breda, 2001).
- Family resilience refers to characteristics, dimensions, and properties of families which help families to be resistant to disruptions in the face of change and adaptive in the face of crisis situation (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988, p. 247 in Van Breda, 2001).

By using family resilience framework in this study, it dwells on the strengths uncover under stress. It is assumed that no single model of functioning or healthy family in a given context since being functional is being assessed in a given context considering family values, resources, structural relationship.

Key Processes in Family Resilience

Belief systems

1. Make Meaning of Adversity
 - A.) Relational view of resilience B.) Normalize, contextualize distress C.) Sense of coherence: View crisis as meaningful, comprehensible, manageable challenge D.) Facilitative appraisal: Causal/explanatory attributions; future expectations
2. Positive Outlook
 - A.) Hope, optimistic bias; confidence in overcoming odds B.) Courage/encouragement; affirm strengths; focus on potential C.) Active initiative and perseverance (can-do spirit) D.) Master the possible; accept what can't be changed; tolerate uncertainty
3. Transcendence and Spirituality
 - A.) Larger values, purpose B.) Spirituality: Faith, contemplative practices, community; connection with nature C.) Inspiration: Envision possibilities; life dreams; creative expression; social action D.) Transformation: Learning, change, and growth from adversity

Organizational patterns

4. Flexibility
 - A.) Open to change: Rebound, reorganize, adapt to new conditions B.) Stability to counter disruption: Continuity, dependability, predictability C.) Strong authoritative leadership: nurture, guide, protect D.) Varied family forms: Cooperative parenting/caregiving teams E.) Couple /co parent relationship: Mutual respect; equal partners
5. Connectedness
 - A.) Mutual support, collaboration, and commitment B.) Respect individual needs, differences C.) Seek reconnection, repair cutoffs, grievances
6. Social and Economic Resources
 - A. Mobilize kin, social, and community networks; models and mentors B. Build financial security; balance work/family strains C. Larger systems: Institutional, structural supports

Communication/problem solving

7.) Clear, Consistent Messages
 - A. Clarify ambiguous information; truth seeking
 8.) Open Emotional Expression
 - A. Share painful feelings; empathic response; tolerate differences
 - B. Pleasurable Interactions, humor; respite
 9.) Collaborative Problem Solving
 - A. Creative brainstorming; resourcefulness. B.) Share decision making; repair conflicts; negotiation; fairness C.) Focus on goals, take concrete steps: build on success; learn from failure D.) Proactive stance: Preparedness, planning, prevention
-

Adapted from Walsh (2012) Normal Family Porcess (4th ed. Pp.399-427) New York, Gullford Press

2.7.3.2 The Integration of Family, Community and Cultural Strengths

A. Family Strengths

Family strengths researches tend to be descriptive in nature (Ponzetti & Long, 1989 as cited in VanBreda, 2001). It tries to give us characteristics of a functional and what constitutes a strong families. Family strengths are defined in various ways:

- Families strengths are those relationship patterns, interpersonal skill and competencies, and social and psychological characteristics which create a sense of positive family identity, promote satisfying and fulfilling interaction among family members, encourage the development of the potential of the family group and individual family members, and contribute to the family's ability to deal effectively with stress and crisis (Williams et al. 1985 in Trivette; Dunst, Deal, Hamer, & Propst, 1990, p.17 all in VanBreda, 2001).
- These are forces and dynamic factors in the relationship which encourage the development of the personal resources and potential of members of the family and which make family life deeply satisfying and fulfilling to family members (Otto, 1975, in Sawin, 1979, p.167 all in VanBreda, 2001).
- Family strengths are the competences and capabilities of both various individual family members and the family unit that are used in response to crises and stress, to meet needs, and to promote, enhance and strengthen the functioning of the family system (Trivette et al., 1990, p. 18 in VanBreda, 2001).

With the profound interest to study family from a strength perspective, DeFrain and Asay (2007) identify characteristics of what constitute a strong family stemming from the researchers concerning families all over the world. Hence, they call it as "Strengths Based Conceptual Framework for Understanding Families Worldwide". The model aims to identify factors that contribute to family wellbeing across diverse cultural settings.

Accordingly, the following are the characteristics of families worldwide characterizing their strengths, to wit: 1.) Appreciation and affection means caring for each other, friendship, respect, playfulness and humor, 2.) Positive communication would mean giving compliments, sharing feelings, avoiding blame, being able to compromise and agreeing to disagree, 3.) Commitment to the family comprises of trust, honesty, dependability, faithfulness and sharing, 4.) Enjoyable time together covers quality time in great quantity, enjoying each other's company, sharing simple good things and the like, 5.) A sense of spiritual well-being implies the sense of spiritual being within the family 6.) The ability to manage stress and crisis effectively.

In the context of family reunification in the child protection services between and amongst the separation and reunification of parents and families brought about by some challenges, Lietz and Strength (2007, p. 205) identified the following strengths essential to the success of reunification, to wit namely:

- Appraisal – Finding meaning in the difficulties families face
- Boundary Setting – Ability and willingness to separate the family system from influence that are unhealthy
- Communication – Verbal and non-verbal expression of thoughts and feelings regarding the crisis.
- Commitment – A strong desire to keep the family together and strong
- Creativity /flexibility – ability to find multiple solutions to a problem and the willingness to try new things
- Humor – Ability to be light –hearted despite the challenges a family face.
- Insight – Ability to gain understanding into a family’s difficulty
- Initiative – Ability and willingness to take action in meeting needs
- Spirituality – A belief system that provides direction and strength to family
- Social Support – Giving and receiving emotional and practical help in the context of relationship with family, friends, and service providers.

Stemming from the various authors of researchers on family strengths, it is important to note that family strengths have generated many list of what constitute family strengths. Thus, in many cases, these may overlap from one to another. Common to their findings are cohesion, communication, problem solving, spirituality and values, family identity and rituals, affective responses, boundaries, flexibility and adaptability, social support, autonomy and coherence.

B.Community Strengths

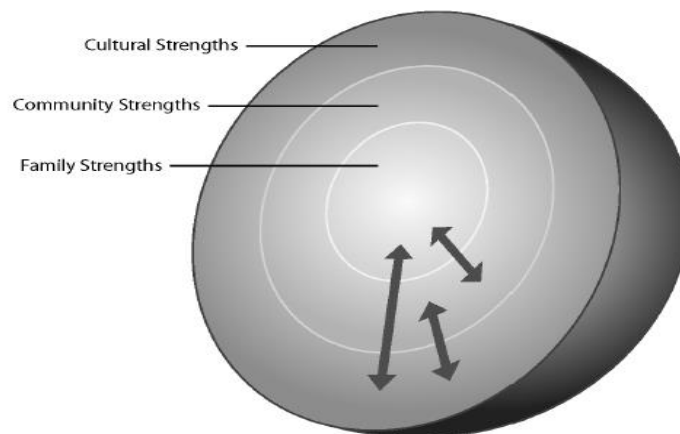
DeFrain & Asay (2007) states that strong families contribute to the well-being of communities, and strong communities enhance the development of strong families. Community strengths are characterized as follows; 1.) A supportive environment that genuinely values families, and a general willingness and natural generosity infused in the culture to help when families are in need 2.) An effective educational delivery system 3.) Religious communities for families seeking this kind of support 4.) Family-service programs developed by government and nongovernmental organizations for families who cannot find the help they need from their own extended family, friends and neighbors and 5.) A safe, secure and healthful environment.

C.Cultural Strengths

The third level of dimension is cultural strengths. Rich cultural history, shared cultural meaning, a stable political process, a viable economy and understanding the global society. With relevance to the rich cultural history, knowing the history of these families would be helpful to uncover strengths (DeFrain & Asay, 2007). Withstanding to this, the shared cultural meaning is also paramount. Another factor is a stable political process and a viable economy. In this sense, we will understand how this stability of politics and economy shaped the perception of strengths amongst these families of single mothers and their children. An understanding of global society will also be contributory as how globalization gives sense of the human inter-connectedness with people around the globe.

2.7.4 Conceptual Framework

The Relationship of Family, Community, and Cultural Strengths: Concentric Circles. In this model, the three areas of strengths move out and away from the single-family unit to the broader culture context related in a concentric fashion. The three areas not only interact from dimension to dimension but also have depth, thus, interacting on various levels.



Adapted from: DeFrain, J., & Asay, A. M. (2007). A strengths-based conceptual framework for understanding families world-wide. *Marriage & Family Review*, 41, 447-466.

The framework acknowledges that families possess existing resources that can be used to manage difficulties. Hence using this conceptual framework, the main difference to the traditional problem-solving approach to researches is that they put emphasis in trying to understand what caused the problem and trying to name it. Although important, but it is also equally essential for the researcher to use strength-based approach that shifts the emphasis from what went wrong to what can be done to enhance family strengths, by building on what the family has already. Hence, the researcher would focus on identifying or uncovering strengths.

2.7.5 Strengths / Resilience as a Social Construction

As discussed previously, this study abides with the social constructionism as a philosophy of phenomenological study. Uncovering family resilience and strengths is a matter of meaning making and construct of the respondents, in this case, the Filipina immigrant families. As social constructions, the language of the respondents is essential as it attributes meaning. Hence, they are value-laden.

As this study embraced the strength based ecological framework, conclusively, the model speaks of how the family strengths, community and cultural strengths influence each other. In the context of migration, the stressful events that may interfere with family developmental stages are considered to be risk factors that may result in a crisis (Greeff & Holtzkamp, 2007 in Walsh

2012). In order to adapt to its new situation, the family must change its internal functions and structures and forge personal and relational transformation and growth out of adversity (Walsh, 2012). During this process, how the family uses various resources from within and outside the family to make adaptive choices plays an important role in its adaptation process.

Albeit this study believes in the significance of strengths perspective, it can't be concluded as more effective, works better than with other theoretical framework because doing so is unnecessary. As a researcher, I think, this gave me the interest as it goes with the core values and principles of strengths and the importance of relationship.

CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter elucidates how the research was conducted. It talks about the whole vignette that captures recruitment process, data collection methods, data analysis, ethical consideration, and delimitations of the study. Hence, this chapter gives an "audit trail" of the research as researchers much present a clear description of the methods that capture careful, thorough and honest research (Ritchie et.al, 2014).

This study is germane to one of the core values of social work and that is hastening the importance of human relationship (IFSW, 2005). The research question sought to know about "How do former single Filipina immigrant mothers in Norway describe their separation and reunification experiences with their child/children? Specific sub-questions were explored hereunder:

- What family strengths interplayed in achieving the reunification of these former single mother Filipina immigrants and their children?
- How did these strengths contribute to achieve reunification?
- What strengths do these families have? And in what way these strengths helped in keeping the reunion of the family?

3.2 Reasons for Choosing Qualitative Research

In an attempt to understand deeply the positive outcomes with regards to the lived experience of family reunification experience of the former single mothers Filipina immigrants with their respective children in Norway, the study aimed to be a qualitative in nature. Bryman (2012) notes that, using a qualitative approach gives the researcher rich and detailed information compared to a quantitative approach. Cresswell (1998) described qualitative research as a way of constructing meaning to the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or a phenomenon. Further, qualitative inquiry is used in this research as it is to be conducted in this setting where identified informants go through their experiences, interact with social world and construct their own reality.

This is a phenomenological study guided by narrative way of interviewing. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) define it as a term that points to an interest in understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspectives and describing the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be (p.26). Participants of this study shared a particular life experience wherein the essence of common themes with regards to their experiences are delved. Findings of this study explored not only their respective experiences but also conditions and situations pertaining to it.

Quantitative and mixed methods approaches were not used as the researcher's aim was geared for understanding the research phenomena of what had happened in the context of the lived experience of family reunification with emphasis to the subjectivity as constructed by the research participants themselves. A qualitative design is helpful for the participants to express their views giving the researcher the allowance to probe something for an in-depth understanding.

The researcher believed that narrative way of interviewing could be the best possible way to describe and surface positive outcomes and /or strengths amongst immigrant families. Falicov (as cited in Black 2005) states that the construction of migration narratives can be captured through the experience of leaving one's county to the country of destination. The goal in narrative interviewing is to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers and general statements.

Riessman (2008) states that narrative comes in any forms. It could be short or too long that builds over the course of one's life. The narrative tradition asserts that people communicate about their lives through the stories they share (Riessman, 2008).

The researcher personally believed that participants could answer questions which were tailored to suite in uncovering the answers of the research questions. Narratives or life stories evolve around a certain topic. By putting forward such topic, the researcher is providing a framework for selecting the story or experience to be included. Verbal and written accounts of people's lives, narrative inquiry can describe the meanings people attach to it.

3.3 Sample Size

The unit of analysis was the family unit. And in this study, the former single-mother families acted as the representative for the family. The sample included eight (8) participants who had immigrated to Norway. These former single Filipina immigrant mothers left their children in Philippines and have been reunited after a year or years of separation. Specifically, they have had already granted the right to family reunification as legal residents in Norway by reasons of work, marriage and the like. The variation of their separation as a family unit runs the gamut of 1-3 years to 4-8 years for some. Why eight ? In qualitative study, the main concerns is exploring, discovering and gaining insights of what has been considered as phenomenon rather than generalization. Sandelowsky (1995) recommended that "determining adequate sample size in qualitative research is in a way a matter of decision and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected.

3.4 Recruitment of Participants

As presented in the beginning of this chapter, the main goal is to describe positive outcomes which point out to family strengths in the lived experience of the participants. Hence, purposive sampling was made. Purposive sampling by way of selecting people who were believed to be knowledgeable of the topic and underwent the same experience. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select a sample from which they can adequately understand, and gain new insights

about the subject investigated. As the name suggests, respondents of this study were chosen with purpose (Ritchie et.al, 2015).

In hindsight, the research question and objectives helped to frame in selecting purposively the informants. With this, hereunder were the criteria set with relevance to the purpose of the study, to wit;

- Former single Filipina immigrant mother, who experienced leaving children in the Philippines under the care or supervision of kinship for at least a year and had the privilege to be granted with reunification rights.
- The family has been living together after the reunification for a year and the reunified child/children have not sent back home due to unresolvable family adjustment.
- The children of these parents have not been subject to child protection service and or any records pertaining to misdemeanor in Norway
- The participant must be willing to participate in the in-depth interview and must know how to speak and understand English.

Bryman (2012) states that there may be layers of gatekeepers in a research project, so that issues of access become an ongoing feature of research. These gatekeepers are the initial for the researcher and leads the researcher to other participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 as cited in Creswell, p. 125, 2007). The sampling of the participants was made initially to a Filipina single mother from whom this study drew inspiration. As I was a church goer in the Catholic Church of Stavanger every Sunday, I was able to gain support from the members of the Filipino church choir. These key informant members in the church group served as gate keepers. Since, I am a Filipino, granting their permission was never a problem at all. Information letters were given with contact details such as phone number and Facebook account (please see attached Appendix A). Experience wise, it wasn't hard for me to get respondents as Filipino Community is relatively active in Stavanger especially in different church groups.

Letters and consent form were given to the participants. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and they were asked to clarify what they didn't understand in order to gain informed consent not deception (please see attached Appendix B). It was explained that the study was voluntary and should they decide to terminate, there would be no damaging effects in any forms. At first, some were hesitant to do so for the reason that they were expecting that the interview might be in English. Having known such, I explained to them that there would never be a structured question but by just telling stories and that vernacular languages would be used.

Another respondent was actually being referred by a common Filipina friend. Contacting her was so easy given the fact that Facebook has been helpful to find her in the group of Filipino Expats in Stavanger. Through then, I explained to her everything about the research. She got excited. She reasoned out that she even told her stories to friends (close or just met). Surprisingly, after I reiterated the purpose of the study. She told me that she would be comfortable if she would tell her journey from Philippines to Norway. Like other respondents, they did the same.

All the participants gave consent to audio tape and allowed me to make notes during interview. The interview took place in places where each felt comfortable. Two (2) respondents were interviewed in their respective houses. I met four (4) respondents in a coffee shop while others are in their respective working places. Several interviews lasted for about 1 hour and half. Some were about 2 hours and I met one respondent twice for she wanted to meet again and talk.

3.5 Data Instrument:

Narrative way of interviewing was used to elicit rich description using the participants' words. As being explained earlier, it was useful to describe family strengths. Another important consideration in conducting the interview was the language used. English and "Tagalog" (dominant language of the Philippines) was used in probing the narrative.

Three phases for conducting interview were made. First, was the pre-interview. During this part, the researcher introduced himself with the basic information with the end view of establishing rapport. Purpose of the study and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity were explained thoroughly. After assessing participants' readiness, in-depth interview followed. Parts of the in depth interview proper are explained below:

The first part of the interview guide was made to elicit information on demographic questions in relation to age, marital status, gender, employment and number of children. The second part consisted of open-ended questions to open up their narrative from their journey emanating from the county of origin (Philippines) until they reached Norway. The third part was asking about their experiences in the reunification and post reunification.

Although, the emphasis of this study is to dwell much on the strength perspective, but probing questions such as challenges was essential to bring back the narrative of the past to elicit lexicons of strength helpful in achieving the success of family reunification. Hence, very essential to surface strength drawn from the interactions and the role it played helpful in the success of reunification experience. This was helpful to uncover strength in micro, mezzo and macro context as perceived by the former single mother Filipino immigrants.

The last phase of the interview was showing gratitude for the meaningful interview experience. Bryman (2012) states that researcher should not forget common courtesy like thanking respondents for sparing time (please see attached appendix C for the interview structure). With this, I was able to grasp the experience of family reunification in relation to the strengths that played paramount in achieving family reunification and keeping the reunion through their narratives. Story telling allowed the researcher to gather rich data information on the family resilience and strengths essential to meet the purpose of this study.

3.6 Managing the Data

3.6.1 Audio Recording and Note Taking

As mentioned, consent was sought for audio recording and note taking. But there was an option for the participants if they wouldn't want to. Ritchie et. al, (2015) explains that it is desirable to

audio record and take down notes during the interview (p. 347). Audio recording becomes less obtrusive than note taking. But these two are essentials for the researcher to devote his or her time in listening and probing something.

Recorded files were stored in the researcher's private computer with a lock using password. This was to ensure respect to what has been promised in line with confidentiality and anonymity. After the audio file has been fully used, where all transcriptions were done, the researcher deleted it and made sure it couldn't be retrieved. Though audio recording was very helpful, note taking also was done to write down themes and outlines of the narratives essential for the findings. Body language, facial expression were jotted down as confirmation of what had been spoken.

3.6.2 Translation

The written communication letters and informed consent were done both in English and Tagalog so as the narrative interviewing. To capture the appropriateness in writing findings and results, data that was in Tagalog was translated in English with literal translation as close as possible to capture participant's voice in the expression of language. At times when clarification was deemed necessary, the researcher made follow-up contact with participant.

3.7 Data Analysis

By doing narrative, researchers opt to choose between several ways of doing an analyses. They are as follows; thematic, structural, dialogic and visual (Riessman, 2008). However, the boundaries of these are not clear. With the interviews being transcribed, the narrative data were being processed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used in this study to identify, analyze and report themes as emerged in the data collected. According to Riessman (2008), thematic narrative analysis is the one often used. It focuses on the content, of "what" has been said. Themes from the corpus emerged. Hereunder are the followed steps for thematic analysis, to wit:

First, familiarizing with data. This means transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas. A revised transcripts was then made from the original transcripts. Expression such as "uhmmm", "ahhh", "yeah", "hahahaha" and the like were removed as these did not mean any significance in the story being shared. It is also important to take note that unnecessary discussion, repetition and information which was irrelevant were deleted in the transcripts. However the portraying of events were preserved.

Secondly, generating initial codes. It means coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code. Third, is searching for themes, which entails collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. Fourth, reviewing themes, it was made through checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. Fifth, defining and naming themes. It went with ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. And lastly producing the report, it came by selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts,

relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.

The choice of thematic analysis as tool to analyze was concerned in the content of the narrative given. By doing thematic analysis, the researcher drew themes and categories across cases. Hence, data are interpreted in the purview of thematic analysis developed by the interviewer stemming from an existing theory, the purpose of investigation and the like (Riesman, 2008).

3.8 Trustworthiness and Credibility

The notion of reliability and validity were from natural science and has been extended to quantitative social science (Ritchie et.al, 2014). Replicability of study findings means reliability and validity of which findings are found. Replicability means the viability of repetition to the findings made if the re-study of the phenomenon will be made. Hence, applied to other immigrant groups there must be a consistency of the results, However, there is much of debate if this can be applied to qualitative research as this embraces different epistemological basis. As argued, replicability is artificial goal in qualitative as there is no single definition of reality (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997; Marshall and Rossman , 1999 as cited in Ritchie et.al, 2014).

Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are the criteria for judging the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba , 1985; Glaser and Strauss , 1967 as cited in Padgett, 2008). Cross checking was made by the researchers to the respondents with regards to the interpretation of the findings to be credible. By saying dependability or auditability, this study is documented to claim its truthfulness or veracity. By means of confirmability, this study is not a product of imagination but emerged from the data gathered. In terms of external validity, this study is limited to the experience of eight (8) former single mothers Filipina immigrant. With this, the findings cannot be generalized but serves to open for future research. Since this is a qualitative study, it only provides thick description for the sample population in relation to the positive outcomes of family reunification and reunion.

Peer debriefing was done as my thesis supervisor was actively involved in the whole journey of this study. Presentation and critiquing were realized with the other thesis supervisors and program coordinator last February 16, 2016 to make sure this study was on track. Further, the eight respondents were contacted for the purpose of transcripts' checking. With this, participants of the study were given the opportunity to correct errors and make additional information with regards to the data. Taking findings back to the participants means credibility (Ritchie et.al, 2014).

3.9 Ethics Approval and Considerations

Ethical clearance from the National Services Data was sought (please see attached appendix D). Utmost confidentiality and anonymity was assured to the participants of the study. It was made clear to them through explaining what and how to deal with the data gathered before the informed consent was signed. All data written and audio recorded were put into trash right after the completion of this study. They were given the leeway to withdraw anytime during the course of the study and was given an assurance that it wouldn't negatively affect in anyways.

Importantly, the ethical clearance was sought at the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), an ethics Committee of Norway that approved the research methodology before the interview.

3.9.1 Ethical Concerns

A.Principles on Non –malifecence, Beneficence

As an outcome of the narrative interviewing, sensitive issues such as alleged physical abuse being experienced by the reunified child/children were brought up. Several of the respondents made mention about this one but only one sought help from the researcher as to how to seek legal ramifications to the perpetrator in the country of origin (Philippines). This information was never forced to be extracted in the narrative. One respondent claimed that the reason why it took her time to confirm to be interviewed was the deliberate thought of sharing her family's story or not. Believing that I could be of help and knowing that I am a social worker in the Philippines, she did contact me and shared her story. The aforementioned scenario puts the researcher in a dilemma. But times like this, a researcher must be guided with ethical standards. Thus, there are prevailing ethical guidelines that served as a hunchback in addressing the issue of alleged children's physical abuse. Here are some ethical values that serve as guide;

- **DISCERNMENT:** The virtue of discernment brings sensitive insight, acute judgment, and understanding to action. Discernment involves the ability to make judgments and reach decisions without being unduly influenced by extraneous considerations, fears, personal attachments, and the like (Reamer, p.31, 2006). In this study, mothers' discernment should be respected.
- **TRUSTWORTHINESS:** Trust is a confident belief in and reliance upon the moral character and competence of another person. Trust entails a confidence that another will act with the right motives and in accordance with appropriate moral norms (Reamer, p.31, 2006). .
- **NONMALEFICENCE:** The principle of non-maleficence asserts an obligation not to inflict harm on others (Reamer, p.32, 2006). As a researcher, I was keen enough not to disclose to anyone their owned narrative, hence respecting privacy.
- **BENEFICENCE:** The term beneficence connotes acts of mercy, kindness, and charity. Forms of beneficence also typically include altruism, love, and humanity. Beneficence refers to an action done to benefit others (Reamer, p. 32, 2006).
- Section 7 pertaining to Norway's guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, law and humanities states that informants should be given an opportunity to deal with their problem that might arise from their participation therein. This is a manifestation of safeguarding harm and unreasonable suffering (The Norwegian Research Ethics Committee 2006) .

Having reflected on the ethical guidelines and prompted from the words of the respondents about her intention to pursue legal ramification, I consulted some lawyers and social work practitioners in the Philipines asking in details informatin about the process and the possible pro's and con's. Thereafter, I presented to her, the information gathered, for her self-determination. As to the progress, she would be willing to bring the case to the authorities in June 2016 as she would be returning in the Philipines for a vacation.

B.Co-authorship in Qualitative Research

Researchers have not yet arrived as to the definitiveness on the conundrums of co authorship issue especially in the publication of such a certain qualitative work. This issue has been debated especially in a collaborative research wherein research is being made by a team. Brought in the same light, I would like to emphasize my ethical responsibility should I decide to publish this work which is of course an ultimate goal. In my experience, I saw how eager several respondents to disclose their stories even to the extent of writing their names in the informed consent as they want to share the ephipany of their life stories. Hence, should publication be made, I would definitely contact them for such inclusion purpose if they would want or not.

3.10 Delimitations

The study dwell only to the former Filipina single mothers' perception on family resilience. Their children and other members of the family were not included due to time constraint and rigor of ethics application at the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD).

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS, ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings, analyses and discussion about the data gathered using narrative form of interview. The first section reveals the description of the respondents in a tabular form with brief explanation on it. Last section of this chapter presents the results from the thematic narrative analysis with an illustration of schema to answer the research questions this study sought to answer. And a short narratives with regards to the separation and reunification of the respondents and their children are presented in the later part.

The main research question explored in this study was: How do former single Filipina immigrant mothers in Norway describe their separation and reunification experiences with their child / children?

Specific sub questions explored the following:

- What family strengths interplayed in achieving the reunification of these former single mother Filipina immigrants and their children?
- How did these strengths contribute to achieve reunification?
- What strengths do these families have? And in what way these strengths helped in keeping the reunion of the family?

Later in this chapter, presents the section of the narratives of the eight single Filipina immigrant mothers in their separation and reunification experiences. It was with the construction of events that matters for involving narrative interviewing in this research by getting the in-depth account of the mother's immigration experience. The researcher was interested to focus on their own perspectives by highlighting their unique stories (Creswell, 1998). Their names have been changed for confidentiality and anonymity purposes. During the interview, they were asked what pseudonym they would like to reflect in the output of this study that reflects being a Filipina. And the following names were identified, namely: Inday, Neneng, Perla, Daday, Gloria, Juanita, Edna, and Jalila.

It is obvious in the presentation of the results/findings that the researcher avoided numerical statements about the thematic narrative findings. This is to concur to the idea that the essence of a qualitative research is to map diversity and/or explore and explain links of the phenomenon being explained rather than measuring the prevalence (Ritchie et.al, 2014). Stemming from this claim therefore, less categorical words are used to explain the themes of the phenomenon rather than numerical indicators (i.e., mostly, few, many and the like). Otherwise, if the findings would be presented in the numerical value it would less likely become accurate as samples of this qualitative study are not designed for such purpose.

Table 1. Respondents' Profiler

Name	Educational Background	Occupation in Norway	Immigration Status	Marital Status (Separation)	Marital Status (Reunification)	Household Size and Type of Family (Reunification)
Juanita	College Graduate	Kantine med arbeide/ Permanent	Norwegian Citizen	Single	Cohabiting	3
Perla	College level	Renhold/ Permanent	5 year EU resident	Single	Married	3
Daday	High School Graduate	Renhold/ Permanent	5 year Norway resident	Single	Married	4
Gloria	High School Graduate	Renhold/ Permanent	Norwegian Citizen	Single	Married	4
Edna	High School Graduate	Renhold/ Permanent	5 year Norway resident	Single	Married	3
Jalilah	College Level	Renhold/ Vicar	5 year Norway resident	Single	Married	4
Inday	Nursing Aid	Renhold/ Permanent	Norwegian Citizen	Single	Married	4
Nening	High School Graduate	Renhold/ Permanent	5 year EU resident	Single	Married	3

Referring to the aforementioned table of the respondents, most of them are high school graduates and several are in college level with the exception of one that holds an undergraduate degree in Social Work. Almost all of them work as "Renhold" (cleaner) in Stavanger in a permanent position with one being "on-call". Few hold an EU residency as they are married to other EU nationalities. Several of them have 5-year Norwegian residency as they are waiting for the requirement of residency before they could apply a permanent one. Two of the respondents are already Norwegian citizens relatively living in Norway for a long period of time. At times, their respective child/children got reunified, they have blended families as they are married to foreign nationals (Norwegians and German by nationalities) with child/children of their own from previous relationships.

Table 2. Respondents' Characteristics with Reunified Child/Children

Name	# of reunified children	Child's Age of Separation	Child's Age Reunification	Years of Separation	Care taker in the Country of Origin	Years of Post Reunification
Juanita	1	4 months	6 years	4 years	Kinship	10 years
Perla	1	2 years	6 years	2 years & half	Kinship	4 years
Daday	2	1 year & half	8 years & half	8 years	Kinship	2 years
Gloria	1	8 years old	9 years	1 year	Kinship	10 years
Edna	1	1 year	3 years	1 year	Kinship	2 years
Jalila	1	3 years old	6 years	2 years & half	Kinship	4 years
Inday	1	2	4 years	1 year & half	Kinship	26 years
Nening	1	3 years old	10 years	1 year	Kinship	2 years

With reference to the table above, most, if not all, have one child being reunified. Years of separation ranges from one {1} to {2} years with the exception of the few respondents that lasted for four and eight years. Common to their experiences is that they left their children when they were {1} to {2} years old under kinship care. From the data above, the longest reunification between and amongst respondents' runs for 8 years followed by four {4} years with several of them range from two {2}- four {4} years.

**4.2 Figure 1: Perceived Strengths in Achieving Reunification:
Common Themes (N= 8)**

Themes	Percentage
A. Appraisal	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation • Positive outlook • Hope 	
B. Spirituality	Several
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in higher being • Transcendent belief and practices 	
C. Communication (through ICT)	Most
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expression of love • Orienting and reorienting of the reunification plan • Acquaintance of new husband/father figure/ new family Members 	
D. Initiated Parenting Strategy	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting from a distance • Collaborative problem solving 	
E. Family Commitment to Reunify	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent visits • Spending quality time 	
F. Social Support	
F.1. Giver of Support	
Income/Sending Remittances	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status symbol/ Pride • Commodifying child/children needs • As means of support to kinship • Paying care givers 	
F.2. Receiver of Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal Social Support (Family/Relatives/Kinship) • Formal Social Support (Government organizations) 	All
UDI /Embassy of Norway in Philippines	Several
Local Social Welfare office	Rare

N. B.: In the narrative UDI / Embassy was not explicitly mentioned but common to their experience was easy facilitation of the family reunification.

Among the themes that emerged from the analysis of the narratives are the perceived appraisal that gives them sense of purpose and future, spirituality, commitment to family, frequent and open communication, frequent visits, commodifying love through sending remittances and the immense social supports from the informal and formal networks. These strengths are considered helpful or factors in achieving family reunification. Please refer to the discussion below.

4.2 .1 Themes

A.Theme One : Appraisal

Lietz and Strengths (2007) define appraisal as one of the family strengths that finds sense of purpose and meaning despite difficult situation. In this study, family's separation by reason of immigration means optimism for a brighter future. Saleeby (2006) made mentioned that this theme embraces direction towards goal, persistence, optimism, belief in the future and hope and that become one of the powerful predictors of positive outcomes.

Explicit in the findings that the phenomenon of separation and reunification of former single Filipina mothers with their children in Norway started with the decision to migrate for the purpose of giving their child/children the "brighter future". Being a former single mother, the responsibility of rearing and raising their children lies in their sole responsibility which couldn't be fulfilled if they would just stay in their home country where poverty is high and government welfare services are weak. Motivated and hopeful, these mothers chose to migrate even if it would cause them pain of missing their children in the course of separation. This finding goes with the view that parents' immigration to separate with their children is a form of sacrifice for the benefit of the children. (Dreby, 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parrenas, 2001; Schalzbauer, 2004; Pribilsky, 2001 as cited in Schapiro et. Al. 2013).

Despite the hardships they experienced during those years, they lingered and eventually achieved what they desired. Juanita, *an au pair before*, shared in her narrative below:

...It feels like hundred times compared to the labor pain I did experience. You know you are working as an au pair and I was taking care of a boy which was then same age with my daughter. As an au pair, I was taking care of somebody else's child while I couldn't with my own daughter. Every time I saw a baby on TV or on the street I would start crying because I would remember her. But every time I cry, I told myself that this is just temporary that everything will be alright. That my family is still blessed for me to be given an opportunity to work abroad which other families are deprived of. Those words I kept on telling myself.

The determination and courage of transnational families as shown by these former single mothers in facing hardships often overclouded in many studies. As Perla relayed her narrative;

...I was really suffering with the feeling of longing to be with my son but I made a promise to him that going abroad was the only way for me to give the easy life and a way for me to provide his needs. All I knew was that one day we could be together and I could

give him the life he deserves. The thought of giving him the best life made me go on. I was just positive that it would be ok and we will be together.

Like any other parents who may struggle with day to day survival, hope for the better future for their children becomes their grounding strengths. In this study, respondents believed that taking chances abroad means hope for the brighter future of their children. Well-functioning families do hold a positivistic view of what is happening in their lives (Beaver & Hampson, 2003 in Walsh 2012). However, Seligman (1990) in Walsh (2012) cautioned that having a positive mindset is not enough if life opportunities are not given. Their positive outlook couldn't be nurtured if the social context is not nurturing per se. That is why, respondents who experienced abroad experience prior becoming an au pair in Norway couldn't help but compare Norway to other countries in terms of how light their au pair work was and how ample was there time contacting their left child. (see also Constable, 2003 cited in Sollund, 2010). Daday shared:

...My employer in Singapore did not allow me to use cellphone. I was there for two years and in that 2 years my way of communicating then was once a month. I was allowed only to call my family once a month for 30 minutes using the cellphone of my employer. But when I became an au pair in Norway, I was surprised that I was allowed to use my cellphone and I called every day. Never did I surrender my passport to my host family and only spent few hours in a day to work. I was even being reminded to take day off and to enjoy it and they also paved way for me to get acquainted with other Filipina in here. I really like here, they value us.

This concurs the idea that one of the reasons for immigration mainly boils down to the motivation of economic gains to improve the lives of the immigrants and their families. (Massey et al., 2002 cited in Perreira et.al 2006). Despite the psychological stress they experienced, they motivated themselves to surpass all those for the sake of their children. It is evident then that the decision to migrate was solely decided by these mothers themselves taken the fact that their children were still young when they left

It is with this experience of the narrative of these former single mothers that give us the knowledge of their affirmation to family strengths amidst the psychological distress of being separated. This can reinforce the helping profession to approach the concept of helplessness with the sense of confidence, hope, and a promising future. It is with the intention of this study to magnify hope, positivism, optimism, sense of purpose and future rather than highlighting pain brought by psychological distress.

B.Theme Two: Spirituality

Dominant to the findings are their narratives that made relevance to their spirituality or the having faith in a higher being. Several of the respondents shared how this made sense to their lives. It is being emphasized that having spirituality doesn't only mean being active to a certain church organizations or going to mass every day or believing in a certain God but manifested in their belief of a higher being that is transcendental and beyond human comprehensions, Juanita narrated;

...The only way I have to make sure that she's ok was I always prayed. I always believed in a higher being and somehow He exists because I could tell there was a time or instances that I felt it that He exists. It is unexplainable. Many times in my life like I was supposed to go somewhere else in Norway because my au pair visa was almost to be expired but in the last months someone came up in front of me and wanted to marry me even just for only three times that we met.

Some of the respondents felt empty at times that they can't spend time to exercise their faith. The strength of this spirituality helped them draw hope that God would hear their prayers and help them realize their good intention to be with their child/children. At times that they didn't have anyone to talk to and at times that situations seemed difficult and confusing, they even prayed even if they are doing their work. Research has shown numerous amount of evidences that deep faith, church practices and meditation can be a source of strengths. (Walsh, 2009d as cited in Walsh 2012). During their troubled times, these mothers sought comfort in their faith.

C.Theme Three: Communication

According to Walsh (2012), one of the attributes of a resilient family is the presence of communication that pave an avenue for expression of love and fostering collaborative problem solving. In an application of this concept to transitional families, former immigrant mothers still, despite distance, took the initiative to fulfill the function of communication as mentioned above. Collaborative problem solving, as experienced by these mothers with the care givers at home, is indeed a resourceful and creative way in sharing decision making and negotiating parental authority essential for the child and or the family at large.

As mentioned previously, it was explained by few that communicating their children was made very difficult during their domestic work at Singapore. But in their Norway experience, all of them made mention that calling at home and talking to their child/children over skype and long distance calls were helpful. It served to ease their pain of longing and monitoring their children. Daday shared:

...I was chatting and calling my daughter every day. It really helped a lot when I missed her. While I was cleaning, I was also calling on the phone to talk to her and to my mother. I always told her how much I love her and I always showed it to her. I cried. I let her know my difficulty of being far from him. And I explained to her the reason why I went abroad.

Communication between these mothers and left children were also documented in the studies made by Dreby, 2006; Lan, 2006; Parrenas, 2005; Schmalzbauer, 2009; Dreby, 2007; Schapiro 2009 as cited in Schapiro et. al, 2013). It is being manifested with many strategies such as phone call every day, social networks such as skype, Facebook, email, yahoo messenger. Withstanding to the available evidence, these mode of communication was also experienced by these mothers in negotiating authority as a mother, expression of their love and constant reminder of the reunification. According to Madianou (2012), ICT which stands for information and communication technology (mobile phones and internet) allows empowered distant "mothering". It allows them to negotiate their maternal identities and roles.

Communicating their children serves also as an avenue for psychological preparation to their children for the plan of reunification. During their calls, they asked their day to day activities of their child/children and also informing them that one day he/she would be in Norway. All of them made mentioned in their narratives about informing and re-informing their child/children about the future possibility of reunifying, Jalila shared;

...Even if I was here in Norway, I informed her often that I was processing her papers and soon she will be here. I always reported to her about the progress of her documents and when possibly she could be here....

Another way of preparing the child/children about the plan of reunifying with another family member (new husband, step sisters/brothers) is also by means of communication. Letting them talk to each other helped somehow. Perla in her narratives,

...When my husband before proposed to marry me, I took an initiative for them to know each other by skyping. I told my son that my husband would be his daddy when he comes. And that my husband is excited for them to play computer games. My husband sent videos to my son and also my son sent videos to us of what he was doing before...

Be it noted that that these findings concur also to the study made by Suárez-Orozco, Todorova & Louie (2004). They said that of paramount importance is how the parents let the child/children make meaning of the separation. Researches such as Dreby (2010) and Artico (2003) all in Schapiro et. al, (2013) suggested in their study that children must be informed and oriented before and during separation for resentment not to happen or at least diminish. If communication is achieved with the purpose of reminding the child/children about the reason of separation at the age where the child can understand already and adding it with the reminder that separation is temporary, it is believed that reunification is manageable and achievable.

In the case of psychologically preparing the children of these mothers at home, several of the respondents said that it was also their care giver/relatives who reminded their children of the love of their mother and preparing them for the day that he/she will be reunified. Walsh (2012) added that families can share and clarify situation and future plans that can facilitate meaning making essential for future planning and decision making. Juanita shared:

... My mother {care giver} frequently reminded my daughter that time comes she would be with m. That I would get her. Everytime she slept, my mother would talk about Norway, the snow as shown in the pictures I sent..

D.Theme Four : Initiated Parenting Strategy

Somehow communicating thru calls became an avenue for problem solving with the care taker in relation to the needs of the child. It was their way also of “mothering” from a distance. They monitor the activities of their children and even tried to do something like homework, school activities despite their physical absence. Juanita in her narratives shared her experience;

...One thing I could not really forget was at time her grandparents were not being listened to whatever they would say, they would call me and let her spoke to me and my daughter would really listen. She would really listen to me .i.e ohh Boging don't do that because it's not right. And I would explain to her why in order for her to understand. I asked her assignment and school activities and the like....

E.Theme Five: Commitment to Reunify

This theme is being reflected in almost all of the respondents. In their narratives, since the beginning of their journey they wanted their child/children to be with them either in Norway or way back home if living in Norway would not be possible. They had in mind that separation was just temporary and that when times comes that they would be granted reunification rights in Norway with their child/children, they would eventually do the necessary steps for them to get their child/children. Most of them are excited and looking forward on the day that it would be realized. Family commitment in this sense is the desire of the mothers to keep the family together. Juanita Gloria in her narrative expressed;

...since then I wanted to be with my daughter. My mother who had been taking care of her can't do anything about my decision because she is my child and I have been working hard for her. My mother, the care taker, knew that.

The abovementioned quotes manifest a strong commitment for a mother wanting the family to be living together. This desire of the mother for them to be together could be one of the foremost reasons of their years of separation. In this study, most of their separation ran only for 1-4 years given the fact that it has been their plan before they immigrated by reason of work or family migration to get their children the soonest time possible. Evidence of difficulty of reunification is also documented in the correlational analyses in the study of Hernandez (2013). Because of the relatively long separation, parents often have problems in the reunified relationship (Arnold, 2006).

E.1: Frequent Visit and Spending Quality Time

Having yearly visits and spending quality time to bond with their child was common to the narratives of the respondents. All of them said they see to it that they can return home yearly and that was their commitment to their family until their children got reunified. Smith et. al, (2004) also highlights in their study that frequent visits to children in home country can facilitate positive parent and child relationship. With limited vacation time, common to their stories are bonding at the beach, malls, sleeping together and the like. In their perception, findings revealed that yearly visit helped in achieving reunification for parents re-establish physical connection with the child thru bonding. Through these moments, they made their children felt their love. As revealed in Perla's narrative;

...Going home after a year of living in Norway was non-negotiable. I went home every year for my child to remember me. When I got home, I spent most of the time with her. Going to mall and spending and beaches. Wherever I went I brought her with me, we did a lot of things together. I made sure I always spend time with my daughter...

Edna also shared;

...And when it was the time for me to get him, I went home beforehand and stayed for 3 months for me at least to bond and for me to be recognized by him at least. Within that 3 months we stayed only together with my son in Manila. It was really my plan so that easily he would be at ease with me. I could still remember when I went home I was the one preparing his food and taking all the things he needed in school even if he didn't like at first for he was always clamoring for my mother. I was at his side when he slept but at time he woke up he would cry hard and asked for the presence of my mother..

Most of them said that other than the communication for the intention of introducing their new partner (husband and step sister/brother), their visit helped the child to know and develop bonding with their husband whom to be considered as their father. Gloria recalled,

...In fact when we were in Manila for a vacation, my husband rented an extra room for my daughter where we stayed intentionally for her and daughter to have time to bond together. They talked together, went to mall and bonded.

Previous conducted researches in reunification pointed out that reunification with immigrant families with the presence of the new siblings or step parents made reunification difficult. (Lashley, 2000; Hine-St 2008; Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, Louie, 2002 in Schapiro et. al 2013). But with this strategy, it facilitates in achieving reunification stemming from their lived experiences.

F.Theme Seven : Social Support

F.1 Giver of Support

Income / Sending Remittances

Remittances have several meanings to the respondents. It means capacity to provide needs for their children and somehow gives authority to negotiate over parenting matters with the care giver. It gives also a sense of pride both to the mother and the family members back home. Perla reiterated;

...I felt ashamed before knowing that it was my sister who gave us money for the milk of my son and the household expenses. I felt that in the house where my father also lived and my siblings, I couldn't have the authority concerning matters of concern. But that moment when I was here (Norway) gave me somehow the authority of what I thought is best for my son and for our family as well...

The abovementioned findings were also found out in the study of Dalgas (2015) in young Filipinas in Denmark. Being an au pair in Denmark gave them the social re-positioning in the family wherein it means voice or participation in the decision making in the family through their remittances being given. Despite separation, all of the respondents made mentioned that despite distance and even upon short visit they would like to show their love and fill in the lost time by

giving materials things and paying someone to be a nanny. It was found out in the previous studies that material needs being provided still has impact for a relationship (Artico, 2003). Hence it is a form of commodifying love with the end view of providing the needs of the child and a way of help thru monetary support to the one taking care of her child/children. Jalila shared her narrative as follows:

...She got what she wanted during that time. Even in the Philippines she has her own car and a driver. She had even a baby sitter who did everything to her. It was really funny, I was a babysitter in Norway and I was also hiring someone to baby sit my own daughter. My thought at that time was I didn't care about when nothing was left for me as long as my daughter had a well lived life. That she could get what she needed. My thought at then was whatever the grandmothers can give I wanted to double it.

Juanita was so excited to express her words;

...Oh! She had two nannies (laugh). She's the princess of the family. My mother was just supervising the nannies, someone was doing the homework, bringing my daughter to the mall. I told them that every time I sent money they should buy new clothes and toys for my child I don't care if it wasn't necessary I just wanted her to feel that she is loved and provided.

Sollund (2010), in her study about Au pair in Norway, found this also amongst Filipina. They actually believe that they came to Norway as not as culture exchange student but as migrant worker driven by financial need. Learned from their experience that their allowance in Norway being an au pair is relatively higher than their salary work in Singapore. This also concurs to the study of immigrant families previously made by Hochschild (2002), Parrenas (2005), Schmalzbauer (2004) in Schapiro et. al, (2013). With reference to their findings, they found out that most children of these immigrant parents sent regular remittances for the improvement of household in terms of their needs. Parents used frequent gifts geared for making connections for their children and provision of maternal/parental responsibility (Potinger 2005; Dreby 2007; Pribilsky 2001 in Schapiro et. al 2013). When mothers are not able to take their children with them, they use a variety of caretaking strategies from a distance, including paying childcare workers (Hondaneu-Sotelo and Hochschild 2002 in Schapiro et. al 2013).

In the perception of these mothers, they believed that even if they were separated they were able to fulfill somehow their parental responsibility as a single parent thru provision of needs which they thought would be impossible if they had just stayed in the Philippines. Although studies revealed that the impact of this so called social and economic co-existence of parenting are scarce (Isaksen, Devi and Hochschild, 2008 in Schapiro et. al 2013).

F.2 Receiver of Support

Social support was mentioned essential in achieving the reunification. Lietz, Lacasa & Cacciatore (2007) define social support as giving and receiving emotional and practical help in the context of relationships with family, friends and service providers. It is a construct that is broadly defined and used but commonly pointing to the helpful aspects of social

interconnectedness (Williams, Barclay, & Schmied, 2004 cited in Leitz 2007). All of them emphasized informal support than the formal ones. Rare did they mention of the help given by professionals. Kinship care through parents and siblings. Edna shared her narrative;

...It was my parents and my sisters whom I entrusted my son to be taken care. I felt secure that they love their grandchild and it was enough for me to trust them after all I knew them because they were the ones also who took care of me. It was my parents and my sisters who supported and helped me process documents like passport for my son.

Previous studies show that when immigrant mothers/parents leave, it is their parents and or siblings who do the physical parenting (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Hochschild, 2002 in Schapiro et. al 2013). And at times they are not available, child shifting from one relative to another have been common experience amongst immigrants from Africa (Pottinger, 2005); Caribbean (Lashley, 2000); Peru (Leinaweaver, 2007) and Philippines (Peterson, 1993) all in Schapiro et. al (2013). Study also shows how immense the support of immigrant kinship in the context of migration as it gives confidence and tolerance in the separation of parents and children (Massey, 1986 in Lopez, 2007).

Evident to this study is the paramount contribution of the informal support of the family. In a country where child protection is weak compared to a welfare state and with the culture where child rearing extends to extended families, this findings was true to all respondents. Extended family is not only responsible for fulfilling the surrogate parenting but also it was found out that they play a crucial role in introjecting to the child about the love and sacrifice of his/her mother and constantly reminding of the imagery of her mother and the plan of reunifying them. This study supports the idea of Falicov (1996) in Lopez (2007) referring to the caregiving triangle that immigrant mothers still occupy great role in parenting in their role of remittances sending as the grandmothers provide the direct parenting and nurturance.

This was also found out in the study of Artico (2003) amongst Latino Immigrant Families that caretakers have important role in keeping the memories of the parents who are working abroad in order for the child to understand and accept. Otherwise, it would be difficult if the care giver would reinforce that parents left and eventually abandoned her/him. Indeed, the presence of extended family/network play a great role in the achievement of reunification. Juanita shared;

...Everytime I called my mother, I would always remind my daughter that I was her mother and she kept on reminding her every time she slept that soon I would come and she would go with me. Had it not been of my mother's initiative of constant reminder, it could have been difficult...

Equally important to the narratives mentioned was the help by their respective husband especially in fulfilling the immigration requirements. It was found out in this study that all of them processed reunification application after they were granted the marriage certificate and or the residency permit visa. For those who came as fiancée, it was then part of their plan that right after marriage the child's papers will be processed to be with them. Hence, marriage doesn't mean only marrying the Filipina woman but also part of the negotiation was the inclusion of the child. Gloria recalled:

...My husband supported me in the processing of my son's papers from the encouragement and to the financial matters because during my first few months in Norway I wasn't able to get a job. It was him who financed all the way from our vacation expenses, plane ticket and so on. Before we got married, I really laid down my cards and we talked about the plan of getting my child as soon as possible because he knew by then how I wished and longed to be with my daughter...

Evident also in the respond of several respondents are the help of their friends and relatives who also worked as an au pair before or got married before them. Jalila shared,

... I was with my fellow au pair to meet up during free day. Somehow it helped me really from thinking much home about my daughter. They supported me for listening to my problems and earned advices.

Juanita mentioned:

... My sisters also who were au pair in here. They encouraged me at times I have problem of not giving up in those years that my child was still in the Philippines...

Formal social support network was rarely mentioned as helpful in the separation and reunification experience. Formal social support, in this study, means government and non-government organizations that facilitate immigrant concerns. It was only Nening who sought help from the local social welfare office and police department with the fear from her former lived in partner;

...It was in May 2015 we went home again. Nobody knew the plan because I was afraid with my former lived in partner. I actually communicated with the Local Social Welfare Office to help me with my situation and asked help from the village local police in getting my son so that he could not do something bad. I was so strategic. I was also with my husband at that time. Before I went to get him, we went to DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development), we talked and planned what to do. Then the DSWD region contacted the MSWD (Municipal Social Welfare and Development) and the local police officers for the plan. We were in a police patrol (with 3 officers) when we went to the house of his father because he was there at that time. The father was so surprised and he asked me why I did it. And then I reasoned out that it was for the safety of my son and my husband. Then after we talked, I just asked him for my son to get something to wear. My son just brought one pair of clothes...

Immigration policy of a certain country of destination may impede or facilitate easy or difficult reunification. Study conducted by Enchautegui and Menjívar (2015) show that immigration policy has impact to the structure and composition of immigrants in the Unites States. Long, expensive and complicated legal reunification was documented in the study amongst immigrants in Italy (Bonizzoni, 2009). But in this study, there experiences seemed different.

Perla shared:

...The 1st time I went home I was married already and processed the legal documents in UDI for my son's reunification. It lasted for 6 months. We processed it before we went home with my husband. We spent their for a month and went back to Norway again but after months the papers of my son was granted and I was excited to go home and get him. It is usually 6 months in Norway, I understand the process no problem at all. And you know in Norway when it comes to a child, visa will be approved because Norway is so responsive to the needs of the child...

Because of the immense support by their husband, in terms of finances and provision of immigration documents such as housing and others complimented by the income of most mothers, processing of reunification took within the range of 3 months to 9 months which is quite different to other immigrants in other countries. The respondents of this study did not mention about the difficulty of processing the reunification. In fact, they said that they understood the range of processing that last for 3-6 months and that Norway's immigration policy is not hindering them.

**4.3 Figure 2: Perceived Family Strengths in Post Family Reunification
Common Themes (N= 8)**

Themes	Percentage
A. Adaptive Parenting Strategies	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment and Acceptance of Parental Responsibility • Developing bicultural way of life • Empathizing and supporting child/children's adjustment • Spending Quality Time • Commodifying Love 	
B. Communication {Open/Positive}	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative problem solving 	
C. Spirituality	Most
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in higher being and practices • Prayer 	
D. Income	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capable to provide needs • Shared financial responsibility • Ability to save child's allowance for education use 	
E. Social Support	
<u>Receiver of Support:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal Social Support (Family/Relatives/Friends) 	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal Social Support 	
School	Most
NAV	All
Women's Crisis Center	Rare
<u>Source of Support</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending remittances 	Most
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming a migrant network 	Most

Taken from the themes of the narratives amongst the respondents, the aforementioned are identified family, community, cultural strengths with regards to their lived experiences of post reunification / re union in Norway. It is important to note that the strengths mentioned above are not linear or stages to follow for their families to be resilient against acculturative stress hence circumventing the dynamics of their family even up to the present.

4.3.1 THEMES

A.Theme One: Adaptive Parenting Strategies

A.1 Family Commitment and Shared Parental Responsibility

One of the strengths mentioned by several respondents are the commitment shared with their husbands towards keeping the family intact amidst challenges and the willingness of their husband to have a full custody thru legal adoption of the reunified child. Perla in her narratives revealed how his husband surprised her with his plan:

...I can really say that my husband loves my son also because he is willing to adopt. I was shocked when he told me about it. He reason out that he doesn't want my son to have a different surname. He is willing to be a father to my son. When there will be meetings at school where a father is needed. He is there. He provides also what my son needs

It is but important to emphasize that family commitment doesn't only mean one thing in their construct. It is not only shown as the initiative of the husband or the partner to legally adopt the reunified child/children because none of the respondents at the moment this research was conducted legally adopted the child already. Several of them expressed the desire of their husband to process the requirements while other haven't yet planned. Family commitment is shown in the acceptability of the husband to be a father figure/parent even if he is not the biological father. It was described as the willingness of their husband to provide the child's needs and even fulfill other parenting responsibility such as discipline and invoking the sense of independence.

Reflecting from the aforementioned, feminist scholars might consider this parenting work as a double burdened role to the mothers as commitment by way of planning to legally adopt and share financial responsibility don't mean equal parenting responsibility. Mothers with reunified children of their own and not from their husbands, hence blended, may have the sole responsibility of full parenting. Norway has been so concern of equality amongst couple in the domestic sphere. Even Norwegian couples themselves, despite equality of gender ideals, men/husbands assume lesser domestic housework compared to women/wives (Kitterød, 2005 in Sollund, 2010).

The complete women revolution, in the context of domestic work, amongst local couples in Norway or the Norwegian may still be incomplete which put much greater height of incompleteness amongst blended families. Although, eyeing to the post-feminist perspective that parenting/mothering maybe defined by these respondents as a more of their responsibility as culture may interplay dominantly in their blended family dynamics and of course the notion of filling up the lost times after years of separation.

A.2 Developing Bicultural Way of Life

All of the respondents made mention that one way that helped their children in the adjustment and eventually lived with them is developing bicultural way of life. Example were given such as the food they prepare at home would be a shift of Filipino and foreign dishes for the child/children. Sometimes, even until now these mothers would prepare two dishes for the child and for the foreign husband as a matter of respecting one's preference. They even use Filipino and Norwegian languages in their homes. Inday shared...

...I see to it that I know what food my child likes so that I can cook it also in here though I also cook other dishes for him to try. We speak Filipino language which also my husband can now slowly understand. I think it is necessary not to forget also being a Filipino even if we are in Norway...

This findings were also found out as one of the protective factors in the study Latino immigrant parents (Perreira et. al, 2006).

A.3 Empathizing and Supporting Children's Adjustment

All of them expressed how they showed affection and support to their children at time that adjustment have been difficult. There were different experiences pertaining to school adjustment. While previous researches show that new educational system was a challenge in terms of adjustment (Lashley, 2000; Glasgow, Gouse-Sheese, 1995 in Schapiro et. al 2013), rarely was it shared that bullying was experienced by reunified child/children. At times like this, they showed support in ways they can. Expressing affection also was paramount. Daday shared;

...The 1st two months were the most challenging because my daughters didn't want to go to school because of bullying. Every time it happened, I went to school and talked to their teacher. This situation lasted for 5 months. My daughters even asked me, "Are you also being bullied at school MAMA", I told them not in school but at work also sometimes. I told them not to give up and just be strong. Every time I talked to them, they would listen...

Jalila mentioned these lines from her narratives,

...I always tell my daughter of her achievement, I always appreciate her success in school even in little ways. Every time I appreciate my daughter I also see to it that I also appreciate her half- sister.

Be it noted also that because school adjustment was rarely mentioned, in this study, at least the researcher interpreted that it wasn't a challenge for many, hence an institution that helped somehow in their adjustment. Justification of this is given in the discussion of formal social support.

A.4 Spending Quality Time

Another strengths found out contributory to the adjustment was the initiative for the family to spend quality time. Scholars also made mention in their respective studies about the importance of the parents to take time off from work at times when children are already reunified with them (Black, 2005; Boss and Greenberg, 2010 as cited in Schapiro (2013).

All of the respondents shared that their lives operate in work and home to spend time with their child/children. Some justified that aside from giving them the things that they didn't experience in the Philippines, they made sure that they have bonding moments with the child and her husband. Nening recalled;

... When my son arrived he became closer with my husband than me. They played video game and others. But I understand because I know he has been looking for a father figure. My husband would bring him to football game to watch. We usually have trip as a family. And that is our bonding. The farthest that we went was Scotland.

Interpreting from the respondents' narratives, it wasn't difficult for them to give time for their children because it was mentioned that they only have 6-8 hour-work in a day. They left when their children are in school and they arrived most likely the same with the child. They even fetched the child at school.

A.5 Commodifying Love

Commodifying love was also mentioned as a reason to fill in the lost times for the mothers to their reunified child/children. All of them shared their stories on how they filled in thru material things which they think that their child lacks. But according to the respondents this strategy was only used for the 1st few months and they actually talked to the child to buy only what is necessary and to value being thrift and not lavishness. Nening shared;

...When he came, he got everything that he wanted like toys. We took him to the malls and buy what he wanted. It helped him not to miss home. At first few months we bought what he liked because I knew he would be missing my mother back home, but after that when I noticed that he already somehow adapted we talked and agreed that we can only buy things or stuff if I have money or most special when it is with red tag {means on sale}. And after that explanation, he wouldn't ask if it wasn't in the red tag when we go to mall until now..

B. Theme Two: Communication

Communication emerged as common experience in the narratives of the respondents. This theme also came across as one of the findings of the study made by Pereira (2006) amongst Latino immigrant parents in United States. It was recommended that migrant parents should speak openly and honestly about issues with their children re: issues they face in the adjustment.

These mothers perceived even before they came to Norway that missing and longing would be experienced by the child to the care giver. Concurrence to the finding of the previous research, findings emphasized that most of reunified children and youth experienced with mixed emotions of being sad of leaving and excited of reunifying (Black, 2005; Abrego, 2009). But believing in the adaptability of these family as revealed in the findings. Most of them mentioned that at the 1st few months of the reunion they called the surrogate parent's frequently thru skype at times that the reunified child/children missed home (Philippines).

Gloria reckoned;

...In the 1st year of course she thought of my mother everyday but we called often almost every day especially in the weekend we spent most of the day talking with my mom

Communication also is used as a collaborative problem solving at times the adjustment bears problem between and amongst couples and children. Daday in her narratives revealed this scenario;

...I told my husband that he should understand my daughters because they are still adjusting and they are still shy with you. When we are in trouble, I don't fight with him instead I just listen to him until he cools down. Every time we have this, I explained to him that we should work it out that we should widen our patience that time will come this will be solved. After we talked, we reconcile. Every time we have trouble, I am the one patching it up because I know the situation more than him. And I think maturely.

Inday and Jalila shared their narratives about problem solving;

...When we have mother daughter conflict, it is my husband really who serves as a mediator. He will talk to me and talk to my daughter and after that we face and talk to each other and my daughter will apologize for the mistake committed.

...That is why we both agreed with my husband that whenever we buy something we must buy the same thing to be given to them so that there will never be a point of difference which often became the start of their petty quarrel..

Jalila also mentioned ways how communication is essential to solve sibling rivalry;

...I really communicate with them and make them understand through communication. Like for example, I explained to them that I am angry because you did not listen to mommy. This has been my strategy during the separation and even until now. Every time they have trouble. I would intervene by talking inside their respective rooms. But I always made sure that the older step daughter must understand. As an elder sister, she must guide my daughter as a younger one. And I always make her understand that despite the fact that they are not biologically related they must treat each other as sisters...

Previous conducted researches in reunification pointed out that reunification with immigrant families with the presence of the new siblings or step parents made reunification difficult (Lashley, 2000; Hine-St 2008; Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, Louie 2002 in Schapiro et. al, 2013). But, in several narratives of this study showed that because of initiated open and positive communication, these mothers are able to overcome the challenge. Hence, be it noted that when families are able to discuss and understand the situation at hand amongst themselves, it is evident that they are moving from surviving the adjustment to adaptation of the current situation. Indeed, open and positive communication is one of the strengths of the family. (Lietz & Strength, 2011).

C. Theme Three – Spirituality

Similar to the perceived strengths during their separation experience is spirituality that came up as a common theme amongst respondents. In concurrence to the abovementioned findings, this doesn't mean being fanatic to religious activities or going to church every day but by their means of seeking solace in times of their worries thru their belief of a higher being and prayer. Inday shared:

... I am not active in church. I don't often go to church but I always pray. You know what I really believe in God and the intercession of Mama Mary, God answered always my prayers every time difficulty comes in terms of adjustment in our family. Sometimes I felt shy asking more because I think He blessed me more than enough...

Previous researches show significant relationship between religiosity and or religious attendance to lower depressive impact (Wright, Frost & Wisecarver, 1993 as cited in Corcoran and Nicholas-Casebolt 2004). In addition, it was found out that it offers a positive health outcome in coping with stress amongst adults. (McCullough, Larson, Hoyt & Koenig, 2000 as cited in Corcoran and Nicholas-Casebolt 2004). Surprisingly, unlike other immigrant studies, church as a form of informal support was not mentioned as expression of their spirituality but only their personal relationship with God. This finding was also discussed by Perreira (2012) in her study amongst Latino immigrants in Unites States.

D. Theme Four - Income and Shared Financial Responsibility at Home

Another theme that came across in the narratives of the respondents is the essential contribution of their income that made them able to share financial responsibility in their family needs. This financial capability was also documented in the previous research amongst immigrant families (Bonizzoni, 2009; Abrego, 2009).

Had it not been of their respective financial capacity to have their independence to provide the needs of their reunified child, despite the availability of financial support of their husband who is also earning, it could have been different. Daday shared;

...In terms of the household expenses, we decided that we should contribute fairly. I feel it's just normal for a couple to help one another. I would opt for us to have separate account than to have a joint account. I still respect the privacy of my husband as to his income. I couldn't really imagine if I don't have work now and just depending from my

husband. Although I am confident that he would not forsake us but still it's different when I have my own income, I can buy what I want especially in buying what my daughters need. I feel shy every time I ask to buy for my daughter's needs.

Because of this financial capability of these mothers, it was believed that they never frustrate their child/children in their expectation to live in comfortable life compared to Philippines. They were consistent in what they gave when they paved visits, showing that they can afford for the child's needs. They have a comfortable house to live and basic necessities are provided at least. This finding differs in previous research made by Lashley (2003) and Lam et. al. (2005). According to them, reunified youth were deceived to have a comfortable living conditions upon arrival due to the perceived wealth by means of providing material things during separation.

E.Theme Five: Social Support

Social support emerged as essential strengths in their experiences. Informal and formal networks are paramount in maintaining the reunion of the family. Believing that they have a better life compared to their siblings and parents at home, they have been the source of support also to their families in the Philippines by way of sending remittances and or facilitating migration to their relatives and friends.

E.1 Receiver of Support: Informal Support (Extended Families, Friends)

Extended families, relatives/in laws, Filipino friends in their own intrinsic capacity are essential in keeping the reunion of the family. Be it noted that the respondents considered parental in laws in Norway and siblings as extended families. Perla mentioned in her narrative;

...I could really feel the support of my in laws, my in laws are very supportive to us. They get my son every weekend and spend in their house or they go to swimming, ice skating, watching movie and buying stuffs that my son likes. I also called my sister at home asking what to do at times I don't understand my son's behavior.

Gloria shared:

...I got a job thru the help of a Filipino friend. It started when we always see each other in bus stop and in stores and she referred me to the job.

All of the participants considered the immense support of the extended families and friends that offer social and economic support at times of difficulty.

Formal Support (Government Organizations)

All of them mentioned about the child allowanced given by NAV. Most also mentioned the role of schools to help their reunified child be able to adjust.

Daday expressed;

...As you know this environment is safer compared to Philippines. Here it is very child friendly community/country and family oriented. It is the best country to raise a child and a family. There are many benefits that I can't get in the Philippine like the child allowance my daughters are receiving. I just saved their child allowance for their future use. We plan to use it for his study in college so that they wouldn't loan from the government. I don't want them to have debt while studying that is why I am saving their child allowance.

Most of the mothers expressed the support of school in the child's adjustment although several made mention of the bullying experience with their child as experienced but it was considered by them as normal children's quarrel in every schools: *Daday claimed,*

...My children liked school because they play there with kids. Although there was a petty children's quarrel but I like it here because the teacher's help the pupils.

They also expressed that it wasn't hard for the child/children to get along and learn because they drew support from school. This differs to the study amongst Latino immigrants in United States as it was the parents who searched for tutor through a Latino community center for such language adaptation (Perreira, 2012). Juanita in her experience relayed;

...There is actually in school that helped my daughter, it was a teacher who spoke with the same language, and they have one hour session per week then she taught my daughter like reading "Tagalog" and "Norsk" languages.. They can talk together anything under the sun. She helped her as a tutor. Until my daughter reached 6th grade. And it was a program of the school to immigrants. A lot of kids would go and play with her and they always include her. Children in Norway are friendly, they don't have bullies. There are some but not common and they are open to everybody and that one thing that helps my daughter also because the school is very friendly.

Some talked about women crisis center for those who experienced divorce from their former husband. These formal support are mentioned as factors of strengths that kept them live and stay in Norway. For those who happened to divorce with their previous husband, they made mention of the help of the women crisis center. Inday gave credit to the existence of women crisis center,

... the CRISIS CENTER was helpful because it became my avenue of expressing my problem to the professionals of the crisis center. I learned that there is a crisis center from my Norwegian friends. I sought help with the women crisis not because of the problem with my daughter but it was because of our married life problem before I got divorced.

E.2 Giver of Support: Sending Remittances

Another strengths of the family that emerged during the interview are their consistency to be the source of helping their respective families in the Philippines. All of them relayed that they continuously support through sending remittances to their parents and or siblings at home (Philippines). Also, most of them served as a migrant network to their siblings and relatives.

Daday expressed;

...Until now actually I am continuously sending and supporting my brother at home. My brother has no work and his wife is pregnant. I fell pity for them. I really keep on asking myself why I have been sending him money despite the fact that I was angry at him when our mother was still alive because he was the one who spent the money which was intended for my children. But I don't know! When it comes to my family at home, I can't say no because I know how hard it was the time also that I didn't have anything.

E.3 Becoming a Migrant Network

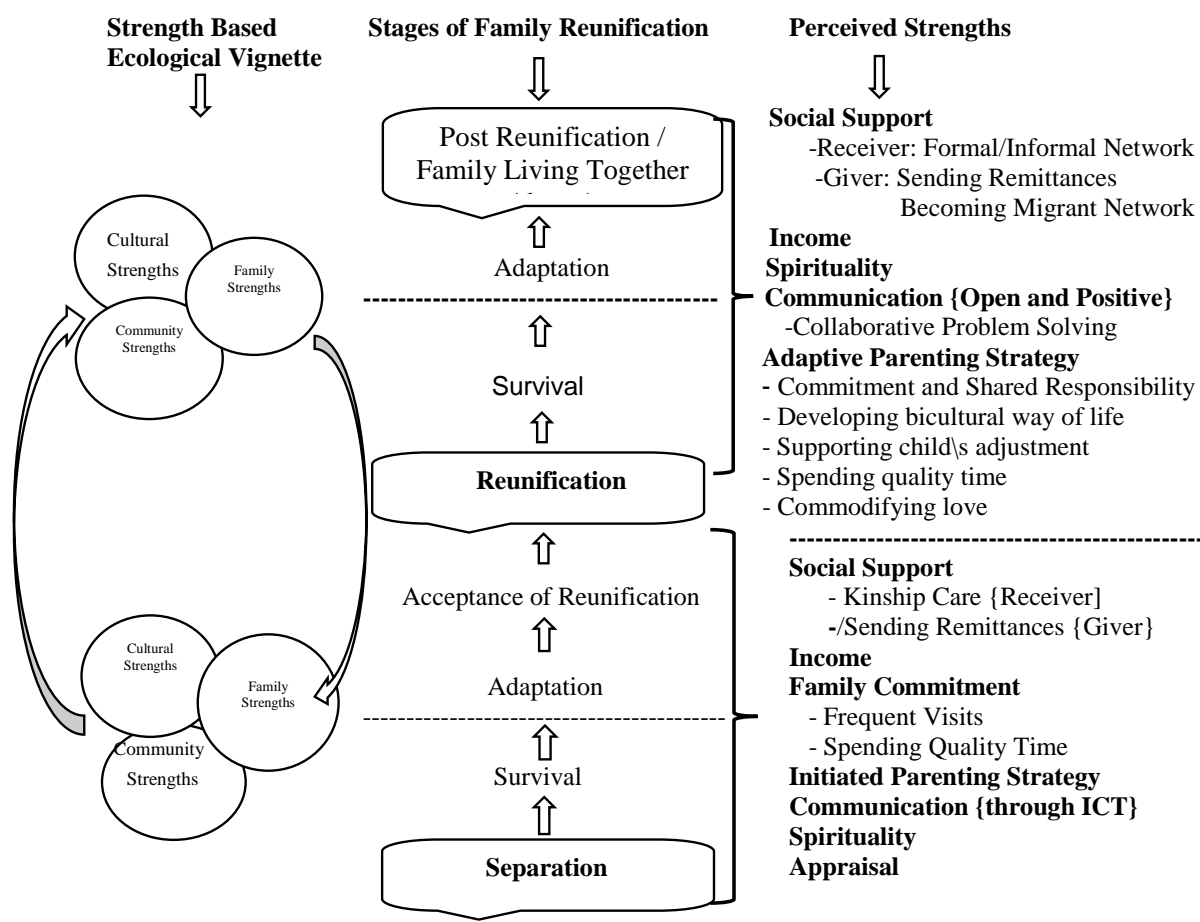
Previous researches have documented the role of networks especially amongst adult immigrants in giving assistance to finding job, places to live, practical information, social and emotional support and the like (Hondagneu-Sotelo, Falicov, 2005; Menjivar 2000 in Schapiro et. al, 2013). One of the strengths mentioned by most all of them speak about being a migrant network. Inday narrated with pride about how she had helped her sisters, several nephews and nieces;

... I was the reason why all my sisters are here. I helped them to be an au pair while some of them found their husband in here that made them stay. Since the time I am here I have been supporting my nephews and nieces by sending them to college to finish a degree. My way of helping is not for my siblings but for their children because I am looking forward for the future of their children. You know what I have already 9 nephews and nieces who are already here as au pair and who are married. I helped them even to stay in our house for free and their income would be there savings. In a way, my lived in partner now, also helped me in processing their visa documents.

For those who finished their au pair job, they referred and recommended to their siblings, relatives and even friends as a successor of the privilege. Others invite their nephews and nieces being a tourist as an entry visa and eventually found a host family in becoming an au pair. They reasoned out that since they benefited from the help of their relatives and friends before, they wanted also to share what they have now by means of being a migrant network.

4.5 Applying the ecological strengths based conceptual framework in the key findings

Figure 3: Achieving Family Reunification and Reunion across Borders: A Family Strength Based Illustration for Former Single Filipina Immigrant Mothers and Children



Source: Author's Illustration

Note:

1. Challenges and risks are not shown for this framework uncovers only the strengths in achieving reunification and post reunification as perceived by the respondents.

4.6 Respondents' Narratives

A. Respondent 1 – Juanita

Juanita is a BS Social Work graduate in the Philippines. She became pregnant during her field placement. Since then, there was no support from his boyfriend and it was a challenging life for her. After graduating from college, she was not able to find work. Thus it led her to decide to venture abroad with the hope that she could provide the needs of her daughter and also for her to support her siblings to finish college. It was a double responsibility bearing the thought of providing for her daughter and for her siblings.

Her 1st immigration experience was in Singapore as a “domestic helper”. Her daughter was just 4 months old in 2001. She wasn't able to come home for 2 years because instead of going home, she could use the money as a support to her daughter and family at home. Life in Singapore was very hard, she was allowed only to communicate once a month and take a day off. At times that she could, she must return immediately to work in the house. It was hell, she described, but she couldn't do anything than to bear it for the sake of her daughter and sisters. All she earned at that time was sent to her family for her daughter and siblings. She was just earning 10,000 pesos per month (200 euro) thus she could not save.

After she finished her contract, she went back to Philippines. By that time, she was also processing her papers as an au pair to one of the host families in Oslo Norway as recommended by her cousin. She described it as not that challenging compared to Singapore. She left to Norway in 2003. She described that her life as an au pair was easy compared to Singapore. She could earn an extra by cleaning other houses. Her monthly allowance as an au pair was intended to send all to Philippines and what she had for her needs was her extra income from cleaning work in other houses.

Compared to Singapore, Juanita could talk by skype everyday with her daughter and her family back home. It made ease her feeling. By then she could visit Philippines once a year though the feeling of leaving her daughter again to be back in Norway was painful. Before her VISA got expired as an AU pair, she was able to find someone who proposed a wedding for her. Months after their wedding, she started to process the documents for her daughter to be reunified. With her husband, they also went home and spent vacation to Philippines and was able to meet her family and her daughter. But after 8 years of staying together, as husband and wife, their relationship turned upside down and ended in 2014.

All in all, they were separated with her daughter for 4 years but in 2006. In the year 2006, she was able to get her daughter with the help of her husband after year of marriage. For that, they rented their own apartment with her alone and her reunified daughter.

She is working as a cook in one of the restaurants in Stavanger as a permanent employee and about to get married again in July with her new lived in partner. Her daughter is in 7th grade now.

B. Respondent 2- Perla

Perla was 17 years old when she got pregnant. She gave birth to her son one month before she turned 18. In her words, she uttered and I quote... "The father of my son is missing in action ever since and I have been a single mother since then..." Perla's mother died when she was young, since then it was her father and eldest sister who provided their needs. Her elder sister was working as an au pair in Norway at that time. As she was being thoughtful as to how to provide the needs of her son, she tried to work as a sales lady. But it turned out to be problematic for no one would take care of her child. After one year, Perla's father came home from doing construction work abroad.

Being an au pair in Norway was her reason of leaving her son to her father and younger sister. It took her one year to decide if she would leave her son at very young age. It was her elder sister who helped her find a host family. Believing that her only way to provide a brighter future for her son is to venture abroad, after a year of weighing her decision she accepted the offer of her sister. Then on, she processed her papers and arrived in Norway 2009.

She left her son under the care of her father and younger sister. As she described, leaving her son was a double edged sword. While working as an au pair and taking care of other's children was painful. She felt the guilt of not taking care of her own daughter. Since the time she worked as an au pair, she was the one sending remittances back to Philippines for her son's, sister and father's needs. Her way of easing her pain of missing her son was through skype. Every day she called and reminded her sister to buy whatever her son's needs.

Her au pair contract was not finished because she got married with her fiancé after months of being together. Then after, she received her legal documents for family reunification. It was about 2 years that they were separated. In 2012, her son was reunified with her and lived with her husband in Norway. Adjustment was never that challenging for she has the immense support of her husband and in laws since then.

Presently she is working as a Renhold in one of the hotels and her husband is working in one of the private companies in Stavanger. Her husband now is complying the requirements to legally adopt her son.

C. Respondent 3 – Daday

Daday, a high school graduate, was a single mom in the Philippines before. She wasn't married to her previous partner. From the start, the biological father of their two children did not give support. Daday and her daughters went home to her parents in the province because her previous partner physically abused her.

She expressed that they experienced eating salted small fish straight for a week. From then on she told herself that she should do something. When the youngest was born, it was very difficult seeing them that she couldn't provide their needs. She left Philippines when she was 24 years old as a "domestic helper" in Singapore.

Her youngest daughter was 11 months at that time and the elder daughter was 4 years old by then. Her employer before was a Chinese family. Her passport and cellphone were surrendered to her employer and she was sleeping in the kitchen and only leftover food was allowed for her to eat. Long distance call was a problem. She was allowed only to call her family for 30 minutes once a month by using the cellphone of her employer. In Singapore, cellphone was never allowed. Way back home, it was her mother whom she entrusted her 2 children. It was really hard. She cried every day. She worked there for two years and wasn't able to go home for she was thinking that instead of spending the money for plane ticket, she would send it back home.

But things changed when she was already in Norway as an Au pair. It was her friend who encouraged her to try her luck in Norway as an au pair. And it was a private agency in Singapore who facilitated in finding host family and processing everything in return she would pay 4000 Singaporean Dollars in installment basis. At that time she was paying it on top of sending remittances at home. It was that financially burdensome indeed.

She was really surprised when she arrived in her host family. Because the host family didn't get her passport and cellphone to surrender in comparison to Singapore. The work was so light accordingly. She was also amazed that her host family would ask her to enjoy outside with friends during Fridays and weekends. As an Au pair, she worked for six months only. The reason why she wasn't able to continue her contract as an au pair was that she got married to one of the locals in Stavanger. After that, she was able to process her family reunification VISA and worked as a cleaner in a "black market" to earn a living as she wasn't allowed to apply for work while waiting for her residency permit.

After 8 years of separation, her two daughters were already reunified in 2014. The reunification experience was challenging but factors that helped in the success of reunification also could be extracted from her narratives. She has been here in Norway for 5 years and is presently working as Renhold in one of the hotels while her husband is a cook in a restaurant.

D.Respondent 4 – Gloria

Gloria at the time of interview has been in Stavanger Norway for 11 years. Prior coming to Norway she had been a single mother to her daughter. There had been no support since then from her boyfriend before in raising their child. There was once but only during her delivery to defray the hospital bills. She was working as a char woman and a "domestic helper" just to meet ends. It was her mother and elder siblings who helped her until she was able to decide to try her luck in Norway.

Compared to other respondents, Gloria left Philippines when she was 33 years of age as a tourist in Norway with her Norwegian chatmate who became her boyfriend at that time. It was referred to her by a common friend who also had the same relationship with her. After months of being a chatmate, he came to Philippines to visit her and to get to know her family as well. It was part of the plan that she would go with her fiancée in going back to Norway. A month after they arrived, they got married. The marriage was already planned by then before her fiancée came to visit her in the Philippines.

She left her daughter to her married sister in the capital city of Philippines. Her daughter was about 8 years old when she left. Their length of separation was about one year. Her daughter was 9 years old when she got reunified with her. It was emotionally challenging to her as a mother but motivated to do so for she believed that what she was doing was for her daughter. She missed her a lot. Long distance call was the way for them to talk. She had been sending remittances for her daughter and her sister who was taking care of her. Love was commodified.

At present they are 4 in the family. Years after their marriage, she was able to deliver another baby which was the source of joy also in the family. The reunified daughter has 13 years of gap with her half sister. Presently, the reunified daughter is 23 years of age now. She is currently in college taking up pharmacy and the younger daughter is 9 years old. In her narrative, she couldn't really recall about difficulty in adjusting because her daughter was so excited to see the baby. There was never an issue of acceptance. She doesn't really feel that they are half sister. She thinks and treats her younger with love and care. Indeed she helps her in taking care of her younger sister. After school she plays with her and even until now they get along and bond together.

Her husband works in a shipping company as a broker while she has been working as Renhold in one of the kommune in Norway as permanent. Believing that her life has been blessed more than she deserved, she has a lot of relatives also whom she had helped to enter and even stay in Norway as an au pair or getting their own respective families. She also sends remittances at home (Phillipines) to help her parents in their daily needs.

E.Respondent 5 – Edna

In her narratives, Edna revealed that the reason why she decided to break up with his former lived in partner was due to his vices that led him to be irresponsible. One day she planned to go home in their province to leave with her parents for a while and never came back to her previous lived in partner.

She is a nursing aid in the Philippines. But was not able to find job. Moved by the idea of giving the life her son deserves and with the influence of her cousin, she tried to venture in searching for a fiancé that would serve as an entry point for her to go abroad. Months of doing so, she was able to find. She entered Norway as an au pair because at that time her fiancé had a 7 year old son. But according to her, it was just their way to get in a VISA to avoid delay because the son she was referring to was living with the mother (former wife of her fiancé).

It was just one (1) year where they had experienced separation with her son. Her son was one year old the time she left in the Philippines. She intentionally planned it that she would not leave her son until he reached one year. Her fiancé known to be "her host family" came to visit her and her family for the intention of knowing them. Her fiancé's visit was scheduled the day of his son's birthday so they would fly back to Norway together.

After 9 months of living together, they got married already and started to process her legal residency being a wife for her to be able to get her son. It was part of their agreement. She revealed in her narratives that her experience of separation and reunification with his son was not

that easy. She experienced psychological distress, mother and child issues and problems. However, explicit to her narratives also the strength that found helpful in the success of the reunification with her son. In the onset of post reunification, she also experienced challenges of parenting but withstanding to that are the capacities of the family and community to help withstand the family together in Norway.

F.Respondent 6 – Jalila

Jalila is a college level. Her family in the Philippines was not financially hard up. She was actually running a small business in the Philippines. She had a small boutique and internet café. It wasn't really her main interest to go to Norway as an au pair for an income, although somehow she could say it was part of the reason but not the main reason at all. It wasn't because it was needed. It was because of the influence of her friends who were au pair in Norway also and the adventure of being in new place, new challenge and new opportunities. Besides, her mother has been working in the USA on top of the financial support to her daughter from the biological father who has been working as nurse in USA.

She left her three-years old in the care with her paternal grandparents. She was then 31 years of age at that time. She could still remember how it was like feeling the thought of flying to Norway. She felt excited, although it was really a mixed feeling of missing her daughter on top of the thought that it was her first time to leave her. She wasn't also sure what would happen for her in Norway. Her first host family was situated in a country side which was completely different in the place where she lived in the Philippines. Because she was raised in the city, it was challenging for her. She has been sending remittances to grandparents that took care of her daughter though it was not necessary. She described that for two years and half of being separated, the lifestyle of her daughter was like a princess having a personal driver and a maid.

She arrived in Norway as a tourist, but after weeks she got a host family and started her au pair work. She told the host family that she had a daughter back home and it was just fine with them. It wasn't her intention to find a husband for the reason of staying in Norway as claimed. But after months of being an au pair, she was able to marry a local in Stavanger. Months later, she already processed the family reunification documents of her daughter as agreed by her husband. While processing the papers she went back home together with her husband for a visit. But unfortunately she wasn't able to bring her daughter that time in coming back to Norway because the VISA was not yet approved. But after months of waiting she came home again to get her daughter.

Jalila is working as Renhold with vicar status in a hotel while her husband work in a government office. Presently they are four in the family, her husband, the reunified daughter and their youngest daughter.

G.Respondent 7 – Inday

Inday said that since childhood it was her dream to go abroad. She relayed that when she was in grade 3 every time the airplane would pass by in the clouds, she would tell herself that one day she could ride one. This ambition intensified when she became a single mother to her son.

After she graduated from a 2- year nursing aid course, she became pregnant to her boyfriend but the relationship did not last long for her boyfriend at that time had another woman also. What was agreed by them was that her boyfriend, the father of the child, would support her son financially. Though they were living separately, the father of her son was still allowed to visit him and to the relatives of her former lived in partner. Being a single mother prod her to venture life abroad bringing hope of giving a brighter future to her son.

A friend helped her to find a “Penpal”. This was the mode of connecting to someone who is searching for a partner abroad. She had been into exchanging messages with 3 men but she saw the interest of a divorced Norwegian guy whom after 3 exchanges of mails gave her an invitation to visit Norway with entry visa as tourist while their wedding was set also a month after her arrival.

She did not inform the biological father of her son about the plan to avoid complexities. And after receiving the invitation letter from her fiancé, she processed her papers for nearly 8 months and went to Norway in September 1990. In her narratives, it wasn't that hard before in processing papers to Norway compared at the present moment. Though, her fiancé also included her son in the invitation but she did not bring him with the apprehension that she did not know literally the man she would going to meet. All she knew by then was the information written in the mails they were exchanging.

She described her first time journey in Norway as taking a chance and finding luck. She didn't know Norway, not any one at all, except the man she would going to meet. All she had at that time was a fervent hope that everything would be alright.

The experience she described in the separation and reunification of her son encompasses challenges and strengths. The day she left her son was challenging as she did not know how to explain to him. Perplexed by the situation, she deceived him that she would just go out and buy something. It was very challenging for her in communicating with her son because the only means she could do so was calling her at it was accordingly 17 kroner per minute. In her narratives, it was really psychologically distressing as she missed her son. But her coping was finding work and even working 10 hours a day as a cleaner in a hotel for her to have something to do and be tired and be able to sleep when she got home.

One year after and half, she already got her son. She went home in January 1992 to get and flew in May 1992 to Norway. His son was 4 years old at that time. They were separated for about 1 year and half. The process of reunification was a bit challenging, but surmounted with the help of her relatives.

She narrated that her son's life in Norway was not hard. He is sociable. He can easily get along. He is gutsy. When he arrived, she let him visit often toy stores where he met friends. By meeting friends, he knew NORSK a little and after 2 weeks it improved and months after her son was so fluent to speak. He wasn't not missing home that much.

Years passed in their reunified life as a mother with the husband in Norway, they were caught by a problem with a former wife of her husband. Her husband became drunkard. Despite everything she did, their relationship did not work out and got divorced. Social support was immense for her and her son to start a new life. Fortunately she got work at that time. And it really helped them to meet ends.

Years have passed again, she met another man and they were able to have a child which is 12 years gap from her reunified son. She described it as a happy family but became challenging when the deceased husband had a cancer and eventually died in 2004.

To have another baby in the family was also a wish granted to her reunified son. Hence, when her daughter was born from the 2nd husband, adjustment with her reunified son was not a problem at all. He didn't treat her as half-sister and he really loves her and very close to each other. Her son took care his sister when she was at work. It was her son's wish to have a siblings because he was jealous with his friends who have brothers and sisters.

Presently, the family is composed of 4 members as she has been living with another man older than her of 7 years. Her reunified son now is aged 28 and her daughter is 16. Her son just recently moved to his own apartment with the end view of living an independent life. She and her reunified son have been living in Norway for about 26 years and for that 26 years they have been visiting Philippines every year to keep the family bond at home.

H.Respondent 8 – Nening

The moment I interviewed Nening, her son was already reunified for 2 years already and she has been married for 6 years to a German guy who also worked in Norway.

Prior to her Norway experience, Nening worked in China in 2007 as a singer in a hotel. It was her 1st abroad experience where she left her son at the age of 3. At first, it was the biological father who took care of his son but eventually it did not last long as their relationship was not legal. She found out that her lived in partner was legally married to someone else and she became the sole parent of her son.

Basically, she went to China to provide what her son's needs. She went to work as a singer. During that time, she was sending remittances for his son's needs through his biological father as it was the arrangement being made by them for the reason that no one could be trusted for taking care of their son. But months after, episodes of neglect were experienced as her son was moving back and forth to his paternal aunt to live temporarily as his father was constantly out.

In her narratives, separation and reunification experience with his son was never easy. In the course of living the separation years, it was painful for her as mother as it was psychologically distressing. But appraising the situation helped them. There was a time that for the period of 2-3 years there was no communication between them for the fear that her son might be physically abused if her previous lived in partner would know that she had a new boyfriend. Nening got into a new relationship with someone he met in the work place. After a year of relationship with her boyfriend, they got married in China and processed their papers to Norway. Upon receiving such legal residency permit in Norway, she decided to get her son with the support of her husband. It was then their plan to get her son after their marriage.

Getting her son from the Philippines to be reunified with her in Norway was horrendous. Comparing to other former single Filipina mothers, her part involved a lot of government authorities just to get her son. Fear was immensely felt for she believed that her son's life would be at stake if the biological father would know. But with the helped of their relatives and with the full support of her German husband, her son came to Norway with her in 2014 at the age 10. Her son enjoys school and never wants to come back to Philippines. Presently she is now working as a Renhold in a hotel and her husband is a mechanic in the airport.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

Stemming from the research questions this study sought to answer, below presents the summary of findings. The discussion in this chapter is anchored from the vignette shown in the previous chapter. This chapter reiterates findings that relate to previous studies *vis 'a vis* negate some that do not. Concluding statements capture the ethos of the importance of highlighting strengths and indeed families have strengths. Reflecting from the ideas mentioned, recommendations are given that may impact macro policy pertaining to immigration both in country of origin and destination, to social work education and practice as well as to fellow researchers. Following the recommendation is my personal critique about this study and future undertakings.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The framework illustrated above is nested on the transactional dynamics of strengths within the family, community, and culture to add on researches that highlights strengths other than risks as previously been made. It is important to acknowledge that the stages that transcends from separation to post reunification is not a linear pattern that the family must do in order to achieve reunification. Hence, these are just the common themes with respect to the sample given in their lived experience.

Analysis of the narratives revealed that strengths are interlocking within the family, community and the cultural context. DeFrain and Asay (2007) believe that the useful approach in a global perspective links family, community and cultural strengths. Hence, from ecological perspective, interactions between and amongst systems are evident. In hindsight, it is hoped in this study to know how the family, in the perception of the former single Filipina immigrants, achieved the reunification despite the years of separation across borders and what strengths do these families have in keeping the reunion. It is believed that families, across time and borders, face challenges in our lives. But it is also believed that families have strengths and resources within themselves, the community and the larger context despite the posing threats of risk in separation and acculturative stress in the reunification of these Filipina immigrants.

Dominant in the previous researches are focused in the locus of individual strengths such as age, high IQ, personality traits and the like. Hence, it becomes deterministic that resilience and or strengths are inherent capacities that differ from one another. Criticizing determinism, it came to realization that resilience involves the interplay of risk and protective factors between and amongst individuals, families, interpersonal, cultural and socio-economic influences (e.g., Garmezy, 1991; Rutter, 1987 as cited in Walsh 2012).

Approaching the study in the context of family resilience, this study used risk and resilience factors dwelling family as a functional unit (Walsh, 1996, 2003, 2006 as cited in Walsh 2012). In using using risk and resilience framework, this research sought only to describe the strengths and or resilience factors which is the focus in the discussion and analyses. Applying this in a systemic transnational context, the researcher sees the separation and reunification of these

families with challenges that impact the whole family as described by the respondents. But it is with the equal footing of believing that despite the challenges, these families have dynamics that made the family adapt. Having said such, the strength based family framework seeks to defy the dominant “problem pathological” notions of families in the context of single parenthood and being a transnational family. Despite challenges, they have immense strengths capable of growth and healing. Nested milieu of strengths essential for growth and transformation are found in the family, groups, community, school, work setting and other social systems (Walsh, 2012).

5.2.1. From Separation to Reunification

It is but important to consider that definition of family is a social construct such as motherhood (Hays, 1996 cited in Agyeman, 2004). When families, in this case single headed household, face challenges of separation due to migration they tend to survive attuning to the changes of the family dynamics until such time that they adapt. Respondents, in their narratives, made mentioned of the risks and or challenges such as, psychological distress, parenting issues, unstable custody of children for some but they saw it as “normative” experience which everyone go through and considered. That those are just part and parcel of their sense of purpose and future for their children and themselves. Hence, this relates to the concept of appraisal of Lietz (2011), that one of the family strengths is the ability to find meaning in the midst of difficulty.

I must say that the strengths identified above are not stages, in fact, they are interlocking and intertwined for achieving the reunification from years of separation. And for this study the ecological framework of strengths perspective expands the emphasis from the individual posing factors of resilience but the systemic recognition of the interlocking family, community and cultural strengths.

Family strengths are those qualities demonstrating love and care for each other that help families succeed in the difficult tasks of life (DeFrain & Asay 2007 p. 448). In this research, identified strengths such as appraisal, spirituality, communication, initiative (initiated parenting strategy from a distance), family commitment, and social support. These concurred to the study made by Lietz & Strengths (2011) about uncovering family strengths in the study with regards to successful reunification between and amongst parents whose children were under the care of children protection system for a certain period of time and got reunified with the parents. Although this study is a reunification in a transnational context, but it was found out that more or less these strengths are evidently the same for achieving family resilience against acculturative stress.

In achieving reunification, appraisal was so important to all of them in finding meaning amidst difficulties of these mothers to be separated from their children for years. This is such an immense strengths which need to be acknowledged in respect to the lived experience of overcoming the said challenges. It could have not been achieving if these mothers did not cast their faith for the belief of a higher being’s intervention that everything happens in accordance with God’s plan.

Such aforementioned belief provided them the strength to go on. These respondents believed that the only way to keep the bond with their family at home especially the child was to constantly

communicate wherein they could express their love gearing for the child not to forget them as their respective mother. With their own strengths, they initiated their own adaptive parenting strategy across distance. This paved them to monitor their children's well-being. This was their way to be flexible and take action to meet family needs. Communication was also their means to come up with a collaborative problem solving with the care giver and their means to psychologically prepare the child for the plan of reunification.

Holding to their commitment to reunify, these mothers believed that time would come that they would be living together. By this, they eventually went home year after year until such time that reunification will be realized. Their reasons were clear and that was to make sure that their children wouldn't forget them and to keep the bond. Such visits were being complimented with spending quality time to fill in the lost time. This strategy also was supported by their husbands / fiancé (in Norway) as they became also significant in the provision of financial, moral and in the fulfillment of the immigration requirements which was immense and helpful.

Another major finding this research found out is the great contribution of social support especially in the form of kinship care. Social support refers to the helpful aspects of social interconnectedness (Williams, Barclay, & Schmied, 2004 in Lietz et. al 2011). It serves as a buffer to the effects of stressful life events. Werner and Smith (1982) in Lietz et. al. (2011) state that those children in poverty can have an important resiliency mechanism by means of alternative caregivers such as grandparent's older siblings, child-care providers. In the context of immigrant parents, these were also found out in the researches amongst immigrants in Africa, Carribean, Peru and Philippines to name few. (i.e. Pottinger 2005; Lashley 2000; Leinaweaver 2007 and Peterson 1993 in Schapiro et. al 2013).

Evidence shows that child rearing, like any other culture, includes the presence of extended families thus child rearing means community responsibility (Collins 1992 cited in Agyeman 2004). By this initiated strategy, the surrogate parenting by the extended families support other scholars multiple attachment concept that because there are multiple significant relationship developed in this kind of rearing, separation might not be as problematic as the immigrant mothers provide the financial needs coupled with intensive communication and the extended families can attend to the physical mothering. (Jones et al, 2004; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002 all in Hernandez 2013). For this, it is being said that extended family network care is prevalent amongst non-Western cultures. (Hatchett & Jackson, 1993; Lallemand & LeMoal, 1981 in Bohr 2010).

Feminist scholars have questioned the concept of motherhood thru the famous western writers of attachment such as Bowlby (1958) as oppressive. As mothers need to be with the child in his or her formative years, feminist scholars have criticized the western ideology of mothering as discriminatory and oppressive (Agyeman, 2004). In application to the immigrant mothers who came from developing countries and whose hope of living and providing the needs of their children is by means of working abroad their sense of motherhood seems to be questionable. Thus this is where the post feminists argued that there must be an inclusion of differences, plurality and heterogeneity of construct (Brown, 1994 as cited in Agyeman, 2004).

In the perception of the respondents with the help of the extended families, such notion of motherhood possesses immense strengths by taking the courage of leaving the comfort zones of being separated with only sense of hope and future for the benefit of their children. Common to their statements are;

...a mother for me is someone who can provide the needs of her child. I have to choose, staying and experience hunger or leaving meantime yet providing my child's needs. Anyway I was confident of getting my child and at that time I was confident that my father and my sisters can take good care of my child...

In this study, it was found that the separated single parent headed family was the source and receiver of social support. Lietz and Strengths (2007) define social support as giving and receiving emotional and practical help in the social relatedness of families, friends and service providers. As receiver of support mentioned previously, extended families (i.e. siblings and grandparents) took the responsibility for child care, providing primarily the parenting support in the physical absence of the mother. These mothers also were helped by their friends in Norway in the form of encouragement and diversion by holding social gatherings and information about their adjustment in Norway thus facilitating social integration.

As the one working in the family abroad, these mothers are the source of support. Instrumentally, the respondents provide the necessary needs thru sending remittances. This remittances not only used to commodify love in the form of provision of needs and wants but also essential for few mothers to pay a "child carer" to fill in their parenting responsibility. What is surprising to this findings is the great contribution of informal network, in this case, the extended families and friends in achieving reunification. Children and family welfare arm of the Philippine government, as the forerunner of welfare services for family and children and other government organizations were rarely mentioned. It is being said that family services programs by government and non-government auspices can facilitate protective factors (Defrain and Asay 2007). However, only one respondent, in a rare case, this play an important role in achieving reunification.

Seen in a macro perspective, income, access to resources and social policies are considered protective factors also (e.g., Durlak, 1998; Smokowski, 1998 cited in Corcoran and Nicholas-Casebolt, 2004). Since respondents of this study mostly were "au pair", they have the means to support their child at home. They are not only helping their own families but also the economy of Philippines as well. Remittances of the Filipino immigrants worldwide runs 12% of the total in GDP (Ratha & Silwal 2011 as cited in Schapiro 2013) where it reached \$ 29.7 Billion in 2015 (Torres, 2015). By this, the Philippines became the third country in terms of GDP contribution thru remittances following China and India. (World Bank as cited in Torres, 2015).

It was also believed that the immigration policy of family reunification in Norway for especially for children is not a factor that hinder even if the application runs to 6 months as per experienced by the respondents. They believed that Norway when it comes to children is supportive. With this, it shows how macro protective factors are linked with the perceived family and community strengths in achieving reunification as they are interlocking. Hence the nature of interactional ecological framework.

5.2.2. From Reunification to Post- Reunification

There are various acculturative challenges which pose risks in the post reunification period. Many studies have shown that there are risk factors mentioned in the literature about defying parental authority, siblings' rivalry in the reunified blended families, attachment problem with regards to the care giver separation, challenges in school like bullying and other social integration issues. But then again, protective factors and or strengths of the reunified family is the focus of this study. Hence, an important contribution to the researches made already in the parlance of strengths and resilience.

Evident in the narrative of the respondents are their family strengths of adaptive parenting strategy manifested in commitment and shared parental responsibility, developing bicultural way of life, communication in an open and positive manner, supporting child's adjustment especially in school, spirituality, spending quality time and commodifying love to fill in the lost time of separation. Had it not been also of the commitment of the step father of the reunified child to keep the family together and to share somehow the parental support in the form of finances and other parental obligations like discipline it could have been different. Their innovative means to develop bicultural way of life trying to keep balance between the Filipino and Norwegian way of life helped the reunified child in the eventual adjustment coupled with the mentioned massive support and positive communication.

Approached in the interlocking nested strengths in the ecological framework, the family strengths are also complemented with the community's social support network, both formal and informal. Suffice it to say that family has its own strengths to maintain the reunified families for years after reunification despite the acculturative challenges. In terms of the family adjustment brought up by reunification, formal organization such as school is found helpful. Indeed, school environment is found out to be a protective factor for at risk children. Caring teachers and safe school have positive regards to at risk children. (Baker, 1999; Bowen et al., 1998; Garnezy, 1993 as cited in Corcoran and Nicholas- Casebolt, 2004). NAV (child allowance) was also mentioned as strength, and Crisis center for women and children.

What is surprising in these findings is the ability of the family to save the child allowance in preparation of the child's college degree. Most of the mothers claimed that their child has bigger money compared to their income as they are savings the child allowance for future use. Their argument is that they don't want their children to avail loans in the future while schooling since they can still afford to provide the need of the child even without spending it. Church organizations was never mentioned as a source of support unlike the other immigrants such as the Latinos in United States. It is their personal relationship with God that the respondents draw strength as a manifestation of their spirituality.

In a macro perspective, a stable government manifested in the welfare states of Norway as a generous social democratic (Esping Anderson, 1990) is an identified strengths. Stable government provides viable economy which are beneficial to families (DeFrain & Asay 2007). Because these families are earning income relatively high compared to the country of origin, they continuously give support thru sending remittances and becoming a migrant network. Their

reasons of doing such is that they wanted to help their extended families back home as a gesture of gratitude for the help bestowed to the family during separation. And also they want their extended families to experience the perceived comfortable life in Norway. This is somehow the shared cultural meaning of family in the Philippines and that is to support one another as a concept of family extends beyond the parents, siblings and relatives.

5.3 Conclusion

In hindsight, this research is aimed to understand and describe family strengths in separation and achieving reunification of Filipino immigrant families in Norway giving emphasis on the experiences of former single Filipina mothers with their children. Purposively, this gives family voice through hearing the experience of these mothers and tries to balance the dominant “pathologically and or problem focused” researches concerning immigrant families. Hence, this is an answer somehow to the recommendation of the study made by Shapiro et.al, (2013) to come up with the study exploring factors related to easier or smoother reunification.

Conclusively, this research about family strengths/resilience can be expressed in the words expressed by one participant which was moving. Gloria shared:

...if I could turn back time, I would still opt to undergo the same experience that I had because it promises future for my child and the whole family as well. It was just “normal” to feel the pain of missing my child but there are ways to do. My life, our family wouldn’t be comfortable and happy had it not been of the experience...

The aforementioned excerpt from the interview is a joyful words of epiphany. This research helps them to realize the success which I believe essential to remind researchers the immense strengths that they have. Reflecting on this, I also believe that families have different stories and niche of strengths. But in this context, I conclude to the emergence of family strengths essential to the adaptability of separation and eventually achieve reunification.

Reiterating the principles of strengths perspective of Salliebey (1997),

...Every individual, family and community have strengths. That struggles maybe injurious but may also become a source of challenge and opportunities and that every environment is full of resources...

This study asserts that family indeed has strengths to adapt despite the separation and acculturative stress of family reunification. Respondents interpreted their challenges with hope of a greater opportunities and a better life complementing the significant role of social network support.

With this perspective, it is the desire of this study to promote understanding of resilience by utilizing the inherent strengths of the families with the surrounding protective factors. To promote strengths and minimize risk, it is but essential for the professionals concerning welfare of immigrants families, especially children, to understand the lived experience of separation and reunification of these families grounded on the contextual cultural interpretation.

This research proposed a sketch or a raw draft for achieving family reunification in a transnational context from years of separation and maintaining the reunion. The mothers of this study gave us insights how the family strengths, community and cultural strengths interplayed with each other to achieve the family reunification and in keeping the union. Identified family strengths, more or less validate the study made of Lietz (2011) with regards to resilient families and expands her notion to a transnational context. More or less same strengths were identified to concur with the studies of Walsh (2012) about key process in family resilience. Using the ecological perspective, indeed this study also validates the strength-based conceptual framework for understanding families worldwide even in the context of reunified transitional families by (DeFrain & Asay, 2007)

The framework gives significance to the literature on immigrant families. It contributes to the understanding of protective factors for eventual reunification amidst the risks of challenges during the family separation by explaining what found helpful stemming from the experience. It also adds in the existing literature about identifying and understanding the protective factors in keeping the reunion of the reunified immigrant's families. This research supports the basic premise of Walsh (2012) that family has key processes to adapt between and amongst the members and their relationship as a matter of systemic interpretation when crises and challenges come. It is found out that the reliance or protective factors are shaped also by the cultural context of these Filipino families.

5.4 Implication for Research, Policy, Education and Practice

Evidence based concerning protective factors that may bring about successful reunification may lead to a more effective family planning for immigration. Therefore, envisioning for the continuity for the developing emerging knowledge in the field of family reunification amongst transnational/immigrant families, hereunder recommendation would be informative for immigrant families themselves, immigration policy and social services providers and social work education.

5.5.1 Recommendation for Future Research

1. By the use of in depth interview, the results provided a rich data with regards to the former single mother Filipina immigrants view on the strengths of the family in the transnational context of separation and reunification to Norway. Themes identified warrant further exploration and development considering future research with a large sample of the same immigrant groups.
2. Having the thought of differences and hastening niches of strengths, future researches may use the risk and resilience framework necessary for immigration policy development and or service provision. This aims to capture the whole separation and reunification experience of this understudied immigrant population.

3. Future research to include the children's perception and other family members, as defined by them, would also be significant considering that this research points out family strengths.
4. Respecting diversity, the nested ecological strengths of different immigrant families may differ in their life course experiences of separation and achieving reunification. Hence, the framework of this study may be used to study between and amongst different immigrant groups.
5. The role of social support, whether formal or informal, government or non – government would be paramount to be studied further as these play immense importance in reunifying immigrant families.
6. A longitudinal study is equally important to be conducted to follow through with the dynamics of family resilience / strengths in keeping the reunified immigrant families.

5.5.2. Recommendation for Country of Origin : (Philippines)

Emphasizing and enhancing the interplay of strengths using resilience framework, some concerns emerged from the study wherein community and macro-cultural resources also can be utilized complimenting the perceived family capability with respect to this phenomenon. Hereunder, are the following:

1. Before the immigrant parent be allowed to go abroad, there must be a proper assessment for the possible kinship care to protect the best interest of the child.
2. Reunified children from immigrant parents must be assessed by the local social welfare and development office before actual reunification happens to know the experience of the child/children in the years of separation as a preventive measures of developing risks if there are.
3. Information drive to the family with regards to risk and positive outcomes of such phenomenon must be given to these immigrant families to strengthen their adaptability.

5.5.3 Recommendation for Country of Destination; (Norway)

1. To strengthen informal support, a parent group might be organized to help those parents undergoing the same experiences wherein they can share insights for achieving the reunification and the reunion of the reunified family. This idea stems from the immigrants' reluctance to seek help to formal organizations influenced by culture that family concerns matters privately. By doing so, we avoid hexing or labelling that these families are problematic clients or service users from a welfare perspective.
2. Berglund (2012) on her report stated that Norway's au pair program would restrict single mothers in joining the program. Having reflected on with the findings, immigration policy of Norway with regards to accepting Filipina au pair should not restrict single

mothers taken into account that this way would mean sense of hope and future to their children and their family. It was found out in this study that child rearing is imbedded in Filipino culture as a matter of extended family responsibility. Indeed it was attested in the narrative of the former single Filipina mother that their lives could have been worse if they stayed and never tried to do au pair work and left their children temporarily.

3. With reference to the second recommendation mentioned above, allowing these immigrants (i.e. au pair single mothers) to spend a yearly vacation in the Philippines as supported by their host family must continue as this has been essential factor that contributed in achieving reunification.
4. Support to those immigrant mothers especially for those who have finished university degree at the country of origin must be enhanced in order not to limit their opportunities to work as “Renhold” or canteen server. Support in the enhancement of their career would mean hastening family strengths.
5. The school seen as protective factors by the respondents and their program to immigrants must continue for easy social integration of the reunified child.

5.5.4 Recommendation for Practice and Social Work Education

1. Social work education and other allied fields must continue enhancing their respective culturally competent curricula with the end view of understanding the phenomenon of immigrant families that impacts children and family as a whole.
2. Europe in general and taken Norway in particular have been challenged with the influx of refugee crises. The findings of this study can be useful in the event that family reunification is desired between and amongst separated refugee families.

5.5 Limitation, Personal Critique and Vision

This is a qualitative phenomenological study which aims to describe the strengths of achieving reunification from the lived experience of former single mother Filipina immigrants with their children in Norway. Emphasis puts on their subjectivity of experience aims to uncover the contextualized interpretation with respect to their culture. Purposively, this qualitative study aimed to be exploratory geared for understanding transitional and reunified families in the light of overcoming the acculturative migration experience. Having focused on strength, this study makes a significant contribution on the literature of family resilience.

I am not saying that strength perspective is better in comparison to other perspectives but a “foot on the door” phenomenon to remind researchers, social work educators and practitioners, policy makers to acknowledge and give honor to the inherent strengths of the families.

The strength of this study points out in understanding understudied population despite the high figure of immigration due to family reunification in Norway. Studies being made with regards to

Filipino community centers on the impact of their migration work highlighting risks and attachment and acculturative challenges and finding meaning about their cultural exchange program such as “au pair”. Detouring from the previous study, this centered on the family’s reunification lived experiences.

Like any other research, this study has limitations. Since, this study focused on the narratives of small population. The findings and or results cannot be conclusive to generalize the whole Filipino family immigrants. Nevertheless, it provided thick description which served the purpose of this study.

In my reflective thought, I might have a personal bias and a kind of blindness being too close to the Filipina immigrants and as a Filipino myself. And it was relatively challenging for me being a researcher and a co- Filipino immigrant because I always needed to probe something in their narrative as they assumed that I know the answers on their journey. I was almost being caught up by being stereotypical in seeing risks factors as common to different immigrant groups. Hence, treating culture and ethnicity as static variable may go against my prevailing perspective of social constructionism.

Lastly, and this might be my final words, I would say that I learned a lot from this journey. It gives complacency to reflect that human beings and their respective families, despite overwhelming challenges have strengths. Their narratives taught me about how family relationship and commitment to reunify is so valuable and this what makes Filipino families strong in spite of a weak government. As a social work educator by profession, it gives me an in depth understanding how important narratives as they can tell the knowledge that is the core of lived experiences.

Believing that there is still so much to do in the name of strengths and juxtaposing this with the vision to do a doctoral degree, I would like to develop this research to involve the perception of the whole family members to capture each and every one’s view on family resilience/strengths. Equally desirable for me is to further on and research with regards to coming up a model of supervisory work with the end view of supporting the positive outcomes on separation and reunification of immigrant families not just with labor migrants but might as well essential to the refugee families given the present refugee influx phenomenon in Norway particularly.

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Appendix A

INFORMATION LETTER for REFERRAL SOURCES

Family Strengths in the Separation and Reunification of Former Single-Mothers and their Children: Lived Experiences of Filipina Immigrants in Norway

Dear Filipino Friends,

Magandang araw po!

I am Brian Ven Climaco Bag-ao, from Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Presently, I am in my last semester affiliated at UiS {University of Stavanger} leading to complete the academic requirement of the European Master's Degree in Social Work with Families and Children thru the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship. As a final requirement, I am doing a research study about family migration.

The purpose of this study is to examine what found helpful in overcoming those challenges amongst the previous single Filipina immigrant mothers and their children in their separation and reunification lived experiences in Norway. Further, it aims to build new knowledge by challenging perspectives in research dwelling much on the weaknesses of the families. The main research question explored in this study was, "How do former single Filipina immigrant mothers in Norway describe their separation and reunification experiences with their child/children?"

Specific sub questions explored the following:

- What family strengths interplayed in achieving the reunification of these former single mother Filipina immigrants and their children?
- How did these strengths contribute to achieve reunification?
- What strengths do these families have? And in what way these strengths helped in keeping the reunion of the family?

Believing that you have a number of Filipino friends in Stavanger thru linkage in church or any Filipino organizations, I would like to humbly request your assistance to please help me find respondents to satisfy my research study. The respondents should be, please refer hereunder:

- Former single Filipina mother, who experienced leaving children in the Philippines under the care or supervision of kinship for at least a year and had the privilege to be granted with reunification rights. Due to legal residency, she was able to get her child/ children and they are now living together in Norway maybe with a father not biologically related to the reunified child/son/daughter.
- The reunified child/children have not sent back in the home country Philippines due to unresolved family adjustment and have not been subject to child protection service and or any record of truancy in school and other misdemeanor in Norway
- The participant must be willing to participate in the in-depth interview. Tagalog/Visayan languages will be used.



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The interview will take only one hour and half at the respondent's convenient time and place. The said interview, subject to the approval of the mothers, will be audio-recorded. Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and she may withdraw anytime. Real names will not reflect, as pseudonyms will be used in the research output to value utmost confidentiality and anonymity. Audio recorded interview and field notes will be crashed and destroyed after processing it. I got already the approval from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services to undergo this research interview and personal letter will be given to the referred mothers as respondents explaining the purpose of this research geared for their approval and participation.

I fervently hope that you will take part in this study by identifying and referring former single Filipina immigrant mothers who underwent this phenomenon. Your support will help me in realizing this study to shed light and to understand their experiences that might have implications for better impact to our fellow Filipinos and other immigrants who are on process of reunifying their families in Norway. Output of this study is essential both for Philippines, as a country of origin, and Norway, as a destination country, in designing and/or enhance appropriate programs and services geared for immigrant families in general, and to the Filipino immigrant families in particular. Interested mothers may call me at **407 61 602** or contact me thru email { **brianvenclimaco@gmail.com** } or you can find me in Facebook by searching my name.

Maraming salamat po. Ang inyu pong tulong ay malaking bahagi sa aking pagtatapos. Once again, thank you, in anticipation, for your help. God bless you and your family.

Sincerely yours,

Brian Ven Climaco Bag-ao

Student

European Master in Social Work with families and children

University of Stavanger

407 61 602

Attested by:

Prof. Kari Søndena

Thesis Supervisor

Faculty of Social Science

Department of Social Studies

University of Stavanger, N-4036 Stavanger, Norway

91 69 48 28



Appendix B

Inquiry of Participation in the Research Project

Family Strengths in the Separation and Reunification of Former Single-Mothers and their Children: Lived Experiences of Filipina Immigrants in Norway

Background of the researcher

I am Brian Ven Climaco Bag-ao, from Surigao del Sur, Philippines. I am currently in my last semester affiliated at UiS {University of Stavanger} leading to complete the academic requirement of the European Master's Degree in Social Work with families and children thru the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship. As a final requirement, I am doing a research study about family reunification in migration context.

The purpose of this study is to examine and understand what found helpful in overcoming those challenges amongst the previous single Filipina immigrant mothers and their children in their separation and reunification lived experiences in Norway. Further, it aims to build new knowledge by challenging perspectives in research dwelling much on the weaknesses of the families. The main research question explored in this study was, "How do former single Filipina immigrant mothers in Norway describe their separation and reunification experiences with their child / children?"

Specific sub questions explored the following:

- What family strengths interplayed in achieving the reunification of these former single mother Filipina immigrants and their children?
- How did these strengths contribute to achieve reunification?
- What strengths do these families have? And in what way these strengths helped in keeping the reunion of the family?

What does it involve to participate in the research project?

Please be informed that the interview will take only one hour and half at your most convenient time and place. Language to be used will be Tagalog/ Visayan. The said interview, subject to your approval, will be audio-recorded. In the course of the interview you do not have to answer any questions that you feel not comfortable in doing so, thus you may end our talk anytime you want. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions that will be given. The interview is not a test. However, your honest narratives or story will be paramount to achieve the objective of this research.

Your decision to participate or not will neither influence any services that your family have now nor will give you the services to which your family does not have.

What will happen with the information about you?

All information gathered will be treated with utmost anonymity and confidentiality. I will have the access to the information and details that appear during interviews. Audio recorded interview and field notes will be crashed and destroyed on the 15th of June 2016 as it will be the completion schedule of my thesis.



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After transcribing the interview, I will let you read the transcriptions to affirm or make corrections with reference to the accuracy of what you might say. Further, real names will not reflect, as pseudonyms will be used in the research output.

Voluntary participation

Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw anytime. Your support to this study will help shed light and might bring future implications for the betterment of our fellow Filipinos and other immigrants who are on process of reunifying their families in Norway. Output of this study is essential both for Philippines, as a country of origin, and Norway, as a destination country, in designing and/or enhancing appropriate programs and services geared for immigrant families in general, and to the Filipino immigrant families in particular. This research project is approved to be undertaken by the Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

If you wish to participate or have any questions about this research study, please contact thru phone **407 61 602** or contact me thru email {brianvenclimaco@gmail.com} and Facebook by searching my name.

Contact information of the supervisor of this research project:

Prof. Kari Søndena
Faculty of Social Science
Department of Social Studies
University of Stavanger, N-4036 Stavanger, Norway
91 69 48 28

Maraming salamat po. Ang inyu pong tulong ay malaking bahagi sa aking pagtatapos. Once again, thank you, in anticipation, for your help. God bless you and your family.

Informed Consent

After being given enough information about this research study, I give consent to participate as one of the respondents.

Signature.....

Date.....

Name

APPENDIX C INTERVIEW GUIDE

Greetings

Tagalog : Hi, Magandang umaga/hapon. Kumusta?.

English : Hi, Good morning/afternoon,. How are you?

Briefing:

N.B. Briefing and the in-depth interview were done in Tagalog not in English.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your positive response. As slated in the letter, this interview will take only one hour and half. In the course of the interview, you do not have to answer any questions that you feel not comfortable in doing so, thus you may end our talk anytime you want. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions that will be given. The interview is not a test. However, your honest narratives or story will be paramount to achieve the objective of this research. As this is voluntary, you may withdraw at any time.

After transcribing the interview, I will let you read the transcriptions to affirm of make corrections with reference to the accuracy of what you might say. Further, real names will not reflect, as pseudonyms will be used in the research output to value utmost confidentiality and anonymity. Audio recorded interview and field notes will be crashed and destroyed after processing it. Before we start? Do you have any questions?

Background of the respondents:

1.) I would like to know some basic information about what you do now in Norway.

- Family situation in the Philippines?
- How old when you left Philippines?
- Age?
- Educational status?
- Civil status?
- Currently living with?
- How many child/children do you have?
- How long have you been in Norway?

Part I. From Separation to Reunification

- Tell me about your experience from the time you decided to leave Philippines especially when you cross, transport and enter into this country
- Can you tel me about your story from the time you decided to get your child until he/she arrived ?

Probing questions

- How young was your child when you left?
- Can you also share your experience about your motivation or reasons of bringing your child in Norway?
- When you had problems during these times, to whom did you ask for help? In what way they helped?
- What helped your family to overcome the challenges during separation and achieve reunification ?

Part II. From Reunification to Post Reunification

- How was the experience during the 1st day of reunion? Can you please tell me what has been the situation from the day you met or arrived at the airport until today?

Probing questions

- For how long you have been reunified?
- How young was your son or daughter when he/she arrived?
- When you had problems during these times, to whom did you ask for help? In what way they helped?
- What helped your family in keeping the family reunion

Thank you very much/ Maraming salamat po.

Appendix D

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



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Kari Søndena
Institutt for sosialfag Universitetet i Stavanger
Kjell Arholms hus
4036 STAVANGER

Vår dato: 29.02.2016

Vår ref: 46845 / 3 / KH

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 21.01.2016. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

46845	<i>Reunification of Filipino Immigrant Families in Norway. Children's Right to Participate and Social Support Network</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	Universitetet i Stavanger, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Kari Søndena
Student	Brian Ven Bag-ao

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 04.06.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Kontaktperson: Kjersti Haugstvedt tlf: 55 58 29 53

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

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no

TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no

