HOW THE CONSTRUCT OF HOST COUNTRY'S NATIONAL IDENTITY AFFECTS IMMIGRANTS' ATTAINMENT OF BELONGING

CASE STUDY OF NICARGUAN IMMIGRANTS IN COSTA RICA

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Master thesis (10th semester)

Culture, Communication and Globalization (MA)
International Migration and Ethnic Relations

Aalborg University, Denmark

July 2016

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'Because night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.
And some of our men just in from the border say
There are no barbarians any longer.
Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
Those people were a kind of solution.'[1]

C. P. Cavafy, 'Waiting for the Barbarians'

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[1] C. P. Cavafy, "Waiting for the Barbarians" from *C.P. Cavafy: Collected Poems.* Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Translation Copyright © 1975, 1992

ABSTRACT

Integration is an important attribute for the receiving countries in order to foster an egalitarian and socially cohesive society. Even though traditionally the integration theme is considered a topic relevant exclusively for the Western societies, middle income countries such as Costa Rica, with the immigrant numbers as high as in some migrant receiving Western countries, should pay attention to the problems caused by lack of integration without hesitation. This study argues that in the context of Costa Rica, immigrants' feeling of national belonging depends on how Costa Rican nation imagines its community and its respective boundaries. The focus of this study is placed on the biggest and known for being most discriminated immigrant group in Costa Rica- Nicaraguans.

Utilising theory and qualitative in depth interviews with long term Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica and Costa Rican nationals, immigrants' belonging is found to vary significantly across different immigrant groups. One of the important findings of this study is that attainment of citizenship does not explain this cross-national variation. Instead, what matters is the informal boundary drawing constructed by the majority population's conception of what is important for being part of the national 'us'. Thus, immigrants' belonging is significantly greater when majority population prioritises attainable criteria of national membership. In addition, these priorities are shown to have deep historical roots for instance through the construct of Costa Rican national identity which is based on the colonial model resulting to immigrants' acceptance being greater towards Western immigrants than towards the Central Americans, especially Nicaraguans. By showing that national imageries have consequences for country's welcoming capacities, and by showing that these welcoming capacities are historically path dependent, the study contributes to the debate within nationalism studies about national identity's causal significance.

INTRODUCTION

> *My first experience after having just stepped on Costa Rica's soil was an encounter with Junior, a middle aged taxi driver who took me to San Jose, the capital city of Costa Rica. As soon as I brought up the topic of migrants in Costa Rica, 'Nicaraguan problem' came up without much encouragement. Racist slurs and discriminatory statements were flowing and I could barely keep up with the rhetoric of xenophobia. "Don't worry this is only one part of it. You will be hearing these and similar things in the media every day", he reassured me. That was my introduction to Costa Rica and also a confirmation that I perhaps have chosen a hot topic for my thesis.*

Costa Rica is a country with highest percentage of immigrants not only in Central but in the entire of Latin America. Foreign born population makes up nine per cent of its total population (CEPAL, 2014). To highlight the distinctiveness from the rest of the region even more, Costa Rican historians, writers and ordinary citizens have long asserted the *exceptionalism* of their nation—complete with its unspoiled natural beauty and social and economic stability—as a safe haven in an otherwise turbulent region (Molina & Palmer, 2007). Costa Ricans are quick to introduce themselves as anti-military, environment conscious and egalitarian society that visibly distinguishes itself from its neighbours. Costa Rica is also a country with highest living standards and strongest economy in the region, making it an attractive destination for those who are looking for employment opportunities and for those who want to enjoy relatively developed and relatively safe natural paradise. Another particularity of Costa Rican *exceptionalism* is their purported 'whiteness', or lighter skin colour, which is considered to be a result of their more 'pure' European heritage. Despite the reality, that the majority of 'white' population in Central Valley[2] are actually mestizos[3], this myth of Costa Rica as a white nation has long been held as a rationale for Costa Rica's national identity building and a reason to associate itself more with the cultures and peoples of Europe than with its neighbours in Central America (*ibid.).* Henceforth, homogeneity, both cultural and ethnic, is another important element of Costa Rica's national identity building. However while Costa Rica has been described by numerous authors as having a homogenous national identity (Molina & Palmer, 2007), the population itself is more ethnically and culturally diverse than it is usually acknowledged the diversity of the nation actually includes several indigenous populations, an Afro-

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[2] Central Valley is the heart of the country which includes the capital city of San José and surrounding suburbs where the majority of middle class Costa Ricans live, and where 2/3 of the national population resides. It's location in the geographical center of the country allows the Central Valley to function as an economic and political core, and as a transportation hub from whence and to where everything must pass. As the majority of *centrovalleanos* live in urban centers or suburbs, it is the values, ideas, and attitudes of the cosmopolitan populace that dominate narratives of Costa Rican national identity (Biesanz et al. 1999).
[3] Mestizo is a term traditionally used in Spain and Spanish America to mean a person of combined European and Amerindian descent.

Caribbean population on the Atlantic coast, and small groups of descendants of immigrants from China, India, Europe, North America, and other parts of the world (Prosser, 2014). Facts such as at the time of independence in 1821, not even one tenth of the population was of direct Spanish descent, while over half were mestizos, blacks, and mulattoes (Molina & Palmer, 2004) is a good illustration of the inaccuracy of the myth of Costa Rica's ethnic homogeneity and its centrality to its national identity.

In addition to historical multicultural formation of Costa Rican nation and national identity, most recently the country is experiencing a significant intake of immigrants, of which a biggest group being from Nicaragua and making up 76.2 per cent of the foreign-born population in Costa Rica (INEC, 2005). As well as for Nicaraguans, Costa Rica is now the adopted homeland of many: Colombians, Salvadorans, Panamanians, Hondurans and Guatemalans, and a substantial number of Europeans and North Americans (Sandoval Garcia, 2007). Costa Rican media has named the current state of immigration as "crisis" which is 'threatening the continuity of country's national identity' (Rocha Gomez, 2006).

In this type of 'crisis' rhetoric, the differences between groups that otherwise would be minor, become highlighted and significant. Fearful of change, and unhappy about what they perceive as increasing insecurity and decaying social service infrastructure, many Costa Ricans require a scapegoat, which has mainly taken the form of the Nicaraguan immigrant, or 'nica'[4] (Sandoval Garcia, 2004).

To outsiders, the people from Nicaragua and Costa Rica seem to be more culturally similar than they are different. Anywhere outside the region a person from either nation would be identified as simply a 'latino', or 'hispanic'; both have colonial history, both speak the same language, are dominated by Catholicism and both are mestizo-majority nations, with small indigenous and other minority populations. It is hard to imagine what cultural differences exist between these two nations that contribute to conflict between them. However an opposition clearly exists. Comments that frame Nicaraguans as 'pests' and 'contaminants' are frequent (Sandoval Garcia, 2004). Indeed, Sandoval Garcia (2004) notes that the four most prolific media frames associated with Nicaraguans are: 'disease', 'immigration', 'border conflicts' and 'criminality' (*ibid.*). According to a number of previous studies, tremendous amounts of immigrants (nearly half a million since 1980 to Costa Rica's less than five million population (Funkhouser; Perez & Sojo, 2003)), of whom most are from

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[4] 'Nica' has become a derogatory term used specifically to describe Nicaraguan migrants of the post 1990 period. 'Nicas' are distinct from both previous Nicaraguan migrants, Nicaraguan refugees of the Sandinista war, and Nicaraguans – those individuals of Nicaraguan nationality who are not thought to drain resources from Costa Rica, e.g. businesspeople and the middle-class.

Nicaragua, present social and economic conditions, divergent histories and past disputes have led to the development of strong oppositional national identities among the citizens of Costa Rica and Nicaragua (Sandoval Garcia, 2004).

Another large group of foreign population in Costa Rica besides immigrants from the neighbouring countries is from the United States, Canada and Europe. According to the IX National Population and Housing Census 2000, people from the United States and Canada in Costa Rica constitute the second largest group, numerically speaking (10,568), and Europeans the fifth group (6,711) (Sandoval Garcia, 2010). However it seems that one barely ever hears or reads negative stories about immigrants coming from this part of the world, quite on the opposite, stories most often heard about Western immigrants in Costa Rica are those of success, hospitality and acceptance. Witnessing such contrast between the reception of Nicaraguans and Western foreigners in Costa Rica, one would wonder: why are they treated so different? While the decades of research on immigration in the social sciences has failed to fully illuminate the reasons why some immigrants thrive in their new homelands while others suffer physically and psychologically, throughout this study I will seek answers that would help to explain this phenomenon in the Costa Rican context. It is intended to identify why immigrants from neighbouring countries, in particular Nicaraguans, despite being culturally alike, experience most discrimination among different immigrant groups in Costa Rica and how discrimination creates boundaries for developing a feeling of belonging more for some immigrants than for the others. Eventually central inquiries, concepts, theories and empirical data which will be presented in the course of this study will aim to answer the following research question:

> *How boundary markers of Costa Rican national identity affect the belonging of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica?*

Since Costa Rica perceives itself as a homogenous country, the concept of national identity is of crucial importance. As previous anthropological studies have revealed, the concept of identity is vital while studying migration (Prosser, 2014). Following various studies, Costa Ricans have consistently defined their national traits as mostly positive (such as: pacifist, democratic, white) while those of Nicaraguans- strongly negative (poor, indigenous[5], violent). Using this as an example, some authors who carried out studies on the topic claim that the construction of the Costa Rican national identity is based on

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[5] Even though indigenousness is not a negative term per se, it is often in Latin American racial discourse.

difference and exclusion (Sandoval Garcia, 2002). If counting in the perceived homogeneity and strong feeling of superiority due to its outstandingly pacific history[6], 'whiter' ethnicity and relatively strong economy, it can be claimed that Costa Rica has a strong national identity construct which can often mean being excluding, with impermeable boundaries for outsiders to trespass.

In this context immigration, especially that of the 'undesirable' ones is viewed as a cultural and economic threat: economic following the claims that immigrants steal jobs, use up welfare services and don't pay taxes; and cultural as feeding into rhetoric that immigrants come with their national identities that are alien (and often inferior) to the local ('exceptional' and 'superior') identities and unless the 'outsiders' are accepted and the initiative to integrate is encouraged, there is a common fear that the local national identity will be interrupted and the social cohesion will be disturbed.

As per Carlos Sandoval Garcia's (2004) interpretation of Benedict Anderson's (1983) theory of "imagined communities", national identities are imagined communities but also, and perhaps more importantly, they are formations constructed on the basis of difference and inequality *(ibid.)*. Within this framework, allusions are frequently made to the creation of cultural expressions in which prejudices, stereotypes and ethnocentric representations coincide, and lay the base of an ideal and utopist society (Jiménez, 2002). By using Anderson's theory in the course of this research I will hypothesise that Nicaraguans in Costa Rica are identified as the 'other'.

While studying migration in the region of Central America, it is interesting to make a parallel with the current state of migration in Europe. Taking into account what has been reviewed above in Central American context, Costa Rica is the country most comparable to Western European countries due to several reasons. Firstly, Costa Rica has kept a model of development and a welfare state with social security programmes based on the Beveridge model (Solano, *et al.,* 2001) which is a derivative of some welfare systems of European nations. Secondly, due to its relative economic superiority over the rest of the region, it is a desirable destination for migrants as most Western European countries are. Thirdly, similarly to a number of European countries such as Denmark, it considers itself vastly homogenous nation in a way that the reception of immigrants can have an excluding nature. Fourth, in terms of the quantity of immigrants' intake, Denmark is recorded to have 10 per cent of its population foreign born, almost exactly that of Costa Rica. All the more,

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[6] Costa Rica was the only country in the region which didn't suffer from a protracted civil war or US military intervention. This many believe is the reason for Costa Rica being the most developed country in the region at present.

on the list of 'World's Happiest Countries' report where Denmark takes the top positon followed by other Nordic countries, Costa Rica is the 12th- the happiest among its neighbours in the region (World Happiness Report, 2013), demonstrating high levels of life satisfaction.

While discussing immigration phenomenon in Costa Rica, it is important to point out that usually the long term goal of an immigrant is to feel at home or to acquire the feeling of belonging. In contemporary Europe theme immediately following immigration topic is integration as a tool to achieve social cohesion. Belonging is considered a basic human need (Fiske, 2004) while successful integration builds communities that are stronger economically and more inclusive socially and culturally (MPI).[7] Furthermore, the sense of belonging appears essential for integration and is understood as becoming a fully accepted part of society. Hans Lödén (2008) poses two crucial questions to describe the integration of immigrants: 'What makes immigrants identify with the country where they live?' and 'To what extent is the majority population prepared to let them do that?' *(ibid.*). He suggests that national identity, as a mean for integration, depends on this national identity being perceived as inclusive by both immigrants and by the native population. It also requires that those already identifying with the nation-state are prepared to let those willing to identify to do so. Therefore to study integration processes, the analysis of national identities becomes relevant, with the necessity for an application of the bilateral view on belonging as 'it is hardly possible to experience belonging if one is not allowed to belong' (*ibid*). While one of this study's core concerns is the impact of the Costa Rica's national identity on Nicaraguan immigrants' feeling of belonging, the focus on the receiving nation's identity is not intended to deny that many individual level factors may also affect the degree to which immigrants identify with their adopted community. Nevertheless for the purposes of this study, the attention to these factors will be deliberately moderated in order to focus on the issue of how belonging might be hindered or eased depending on how immigrants are perceived by the receiving society.

It seems that in Europe, the feeling of belonging of immigrants to their adopted country could be obstructed by not fitting in culturally or by not being able to satisfy the cultural markers (i.e. language, traditions, customs, religion etc.) However, it appears that in Costa Rica it is not necessarily the proximity of migrant's language, culture, religion or traditions that determine how strongly migrant feels part of the society. It is seemingly more dependent on what kind of migrant one is and what are the perceptions of host society

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[7] http://www.migrationpolicy.org/topics/immigrant-integration

towards that group of migrants. The premise of this study claims that the feeling of belonging is firstly determined by the country of origin: the situation is not the same in the case of a North American or European immigrants and that of Nicaraguans. In addition, according to David Delgado Montaldo (2008), a level of integration of an immigrant does not depend only on his/her personal characteristics – they depend heavily on the amount and quality of the rights and duties they are provided by the recipient society which highlights the point that the reception can influence migrant's capacity of integration at great lengths (*ibid.*). In order to analyse to what extent immigrants are integrated in the receiving society, it is equally important to look into receiving country's degree of acceptance of immigration. A high level of acceptance will indirectly promote the conditions for successful integration – if a specific immigrant population is welcomed, it will be able to contribute to the life of the community better.

Within the course of this study I will define national identity as the national community's self-image (Anderson, 1991), an image which requires not only ideas of who belongs to the national community, but also who does not belong. In this perspective, national identity is constructed and maintained by boundary drawing which can also be considered a process of exclusion (Barth, 1969; Triandafyllidou, 2002). I argue that supposedly strongly homogenous Costa Rican national identity is not leaving much space for 'them' to become 'us'. Since individual identification with a group largely relies on perceptions of that group's acceptance (Weiner, 1996; Wu, Schimmele and Hou, 2012), variations in how the boundaries towards non-nationals are drawn is expected to affect immigrants' experience of a process towards achieving the belonging.

Developing the method of measuring the integration and belonging of studied immigrants in Costa Rica, as it appears in the national identity literature, policy (formal) and majority attitudes (informal) reflected by the interview participants as two different manifestations of national boundaries will be used. While it should be acknowledged that the two forms of boundary drawing are interrelated, policies and majority attitudes differ with respect as to who constructs them, i.e. elites or ordinary people. However secondary data analysed in preparation to this study suggests that in the context of Costa Rica, ethnicity weights more than nationality and it has been claimed that Costa Rican citizenship does not add much to the immigrant's genuine feeling of belonging, particularly to the ones that are most discriminated. General hypothesis thus is that the feeling of belonging of long term migrants in Costa Rica depends on the rigid socially constructed (and often racial) hierarchies. Consequently, when national identity is perceived as exclusive, the costs of

'not being allowed to belong' may be serious. Symbolic boundaries turn into social boundaries with, for instance, economic effects. Poverty among ethnic minorities may be viewed as a sign of incomplete or failed integration, and points at the intersection between class and ethnicity (Arrighi, 2007).

The purpose of the study is focused on the long term immigrants from Nicaragua and the barriers they experience for belonging in Costa Rica. In order to make the findings of this study more tangible, I will intend to test how significant majority attitudes and, to some extent, national policies such as citizenship are for immigrants' belonging to their adopted country, i.e. Costa Rica.

In the content of this study, it will firstly be looked at the national identity theory and its operationalisation in Costa Rican context by trying to illustrate the features that generate exclusionary practices towards certain groups of migrants.

Being identified as 'other' or someone who doesn't fit in the imagery of 'an ideal' foreigner in Costa Rica, creates boundaries for the development of the feeling of belonging. This study therefore will be investigating how discriminatory strategies such as (hypothetically) Costa Rican national identity and the boundaries deriving from it can lead to social exclusion of certain immigrant populations in Costa Rica.

While throughout the length of this study multiple sources of evidence will be used, emphasis will be put on the in depth semi structured interviews with Nicaraguan immigrants and members of Costa Rican society. According to Robert K. Yin (1989), the case study as research method is particularly adequate when research questions are formulated in terms of 'how?' and 'why?' *(ibid.).* The study will be mainly carried out on the micro level, i.e. focusing on the perceptions, feelings and personal stories. However, the opinions of actors from the policy level, such as the Costa Rican government will be used as a complimentary source to add to the impartiality of this study. Theoretical analysis and statistics furthermore will act as important evidence while building research framework and examining the results of the empirical data. The qualitative research methods such as constructivism and interpretivist will be used to reveal the experiences of immigrants in Costa Rica. Additionally it is intended to unravel the complexities surrounding the issue of identity and to answer the question: what local perceptions mean to immigrants' identity and how it can shape their lives and their sense of belonging.

To accomplish these goals, the research will focus on the following three objectives:

- To define the formation of Costa Rican national identity

    National identity as the national community's self-image (as per Anderson 1991);

- To study the possible obstacles for inclusion or boundary markers deriving from the Costa Rican national identity

    The "cultural stuff" (as per Barth 1969) that makes up the identities people become attached to. Anthropologists have devoted their energies to characterizing the boundaries that groups construct to distinguish their members from those of other groups, at the expense of a thorough examination of the content within those boundaries (Eriksen, 1993);

- To identify how Costa Rican national identity boundary markers affect long term Nicaraguan migrants' sense of belonging in Costa Rica and to identify the outcomes that exclusion cause on the "excluded"

    Most significant outcome of being excluded is not to belong (Weir, 2012). It will be analysed how being excluded leads to forming an out-group and how segregation can consequently lead to social, economic and political marginalization.

These three goals are aimed to be achieved by using secondary data as initial information which then will be confirmed (or refuted) by analysis of interview results.

This research is innovative in a way that in Costa Rica, and in the rest of the region for that matter, questions of belonging and integration haven't been raised as persistently, if at all, as they have been in European countries despite the fact that Costa Rica has much in common with Western migrant receiving countries. An inquiry whether immigrants have acquired a sense of belonging to their adopted country doesn't seem to attract immediate attention in Costa Rican society regardless of the fact that it has been proven that social cohesion benefits societies. As an overall aim throughout this research I will intend to demonstrate how integration of immigrants is important for countries that receive significant numbers of foreigners.

MIGRATION IN COSTA RICA

Migratory movements are not a new phenomenon in Costa Rica. From the 1960s up until now a significant part of population living in Costa Rica's territory has been foreign born. UN experts estimate the weight of foreign population in Costa Rica is more than nine percent at present (ECLAC, 2014), and that is accounting only migrants with regular migratory status knowing that the numbers of migrants with irregular status are rampant due to Costa Rica's restrictive immigration policy, especially towards Nicaraguans, the biggest immigrant minority in Costa Rica.

This chapter will detail out the development of the processes of immigration in Costa Rica from the colonial to contemporary times while explaining the reasons and consequences of migration. Additionally migration policies will be touched upon in order to demonstrate State's involvement in controlling migration. This will lay the background for the study and help to understand the historical developments of certain migratory patterns, perceptions of local population towards different types of immigrants and reasoning behind the current migratory policies.

Throughout the colonial times, in Costa Rica as well as in other Central American countries, the opening up and development of new lands for agriculture required foreign labour force. Seasonal workers migrated to supplement the permanent wage labourers during the harvests in plantation areas (Hamilton & Chinchilla, 1991). During the early days of the colonial era, labour migration to Latin America was primarily African in origin, brought from the colonies in the Caribbean. In the nineteenth century, Jamaican and Chinese immigrants came to Costa Rica in large numbers to work on the construction of railroads connecting the Atlantic coast to the Central Valley. Many of these workers stayed in the area, taking jobs on banana, coffee and cocoa plantations (Alvarenga Venútolo, 2007).

Besides the much needed labour force, national efforts were constantly made to promote immigration from Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However the majority of the foreigners coming were still from neighbouring Central American countries (Hamilton & Chinchilla, 1991).

A more contemporary wave of migrants was brought to Costa Rica as a consequence of hurricane Mitch in 1998. Nicaragua reported around 3,000 dead people and more than 65,000 affected families. These numbers represented more than 400,000 people. Costa Rica admitted a significant number of Central American immigrants, many of which benefited from 1999 immigration amnesty, a measure that regularized the immigration situation of more than 150,000 Nicaraguans (OIM, 2001).

Over all, migratory flows with higher or lower intensity towards Costa Rica have existed ever since Costa Rica's creation (1847). Under such circumstances, by now Costa Rican population should be used to living in a reality configured by migration. Yet, the migration of the last years has been placed in a notorious spotlight. The study that has been carried out by National University Department for Social Studies on Population (IDESPO) in 2012 states that most respondents determine the media and the press as their main source of information on foreigners in Costa Rica. Moreover, a significant percentage of respondents

overwhelmingly noted negative references to the type of information they receive about foreign population through the media: 29.2 per cent mentioned the issue of violence, 6.1 per cent that migrants come to 'steal' Costa Ricans' employment opportunities and 2.7 per cent said that most of the messages on the media about migrants are discriminatory (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1: *Perceptions of the opinions on migrants in the media*
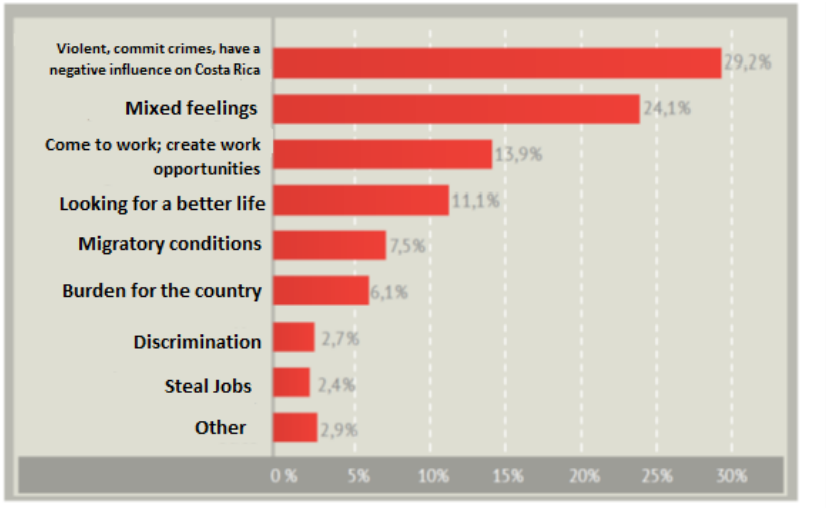
Source: IDESPO-UNA: 2012

The reason for the current 'immigration crisis' rhetoric could be explained by the permanent nature of the recent immigrants. If looking into the motives of immigration to Costa Rica, the sharp difference between immigration prior to 1990s, in the 1990s and in recent years can be observed in a way that the main group of immigrants prior to the 1990s were of temporary labour nature, during the 1990s - composed of refugees, while in recent years immigration has been predominately of permanent labour nature (Prosser, 2014).

All in all in can be assumed that attitudes towards immigrants in Costa Rica might vary depending on the immigrant's origin, the purposes a migrant arrives with and the purposes and length of the intended stay.

Nicaraguans in Costa Rica

Most of our insight about immigration comes from studies of 'third world' immigrants in what have been, up until recently, the traditional receiving countries such as Europe, the United States, Canada, etc. Though Central America has been featured in the research as an important attribute of the immigration pattern, it is depicted primarily as a source of emigrants, rather than a destination (Caamaño Morúa, 2007). However global trends in

migration have been shifting, and studies of 'third world' immigrants in the traditional 'first world' receiving nations do not present the accurate picture of contemporary migrations. In recent years, as the economies of developing countries have industrialized and new labour markets have opened up, the supply and demand for labour has increasingly crossed national boundaries. This new form of South-South migration, with immigrants leaving one developing nation for another, has become a rule rather than an exception among the present streams of migrants (Gindling, 2009). With headlines like 'Nicaraguans are not migrating to the U.S. — they have their own 'American Dream': Costa Rica' [8] being common, Nicaraguan migration to Costa Rica is evidently a major example of South-South migration in Latin America.

For the majority of Nicaraguan immigrants, Costa Rica is a desirable destination: its steady growth in agriculture, industry and the tourism sector historically has created labour gaps that Nicaraguans have been eager to fill. Moreover, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the percentage of people who live under the poverty line in 2014 in Nicaragua was 46.2 per cent while in Costa Rica it was 22.4 per cent (*ibid.).* To add to the above, half of the Nicaraguan workers who are 15 or older do not have any qualification (in the case of women this value increases to 60.3 per cent), and only 6.6 per cent belong to the technical and professional areas (*ibid.).* In contrast, the level of qualifications among Costa Ricans is 22.5 per cent (*ibid.).* If the political instability and the precarious living conditions in which many Nicaraguans live in their homeland are added to the equation, one sees a lot of sense why many Nicaraguans view immigration as an escape and a way to improve their living conditions.

It also makes sense for Nicaraguans to be attracted to Costa Rica in terms of geographical proximity; for the impoverished population of Nicaragua, the lure of opportunities closer to home, and the promise of a journey that is shorter, cheaper and perhaps less dangerous than the long trek to the United States, has been hard to resist (Rocha Gomez, 2006). Moreover the long history of labour migration between the two neighbouring countries also means that many Nicaraguans have established migration networks in Costa Rica. The success stories that are transmitted back home serve as a draw for many who are struggling to find work in the bleak Nicaraguan economy. Furthermore, Costa Rica seems to offer something else that other destinations, such as the United States, do not: a familiar cultural and linguistic heritage. According to data from the General Immigration Directorship (2005), the population of Nicaraguans, the rest of the Central Americans (not

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[8] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sergio-ramirez/nicaraguans-migrating-costa-rica_b_5614269.html

including Belizeans) and Colombians who live permanently in the country represent 76.2, 5.3 and 3.3 per cent, respectively, from the total of foreigners in Costa Rica. Therefore it can be said that 85 per cent of the immigrants in the country have more cultural similarities than differences with the native population. Cultural similarities between Costa Rican and Nicaragua echo in the rhythms of their folklore, traditional dances and music (Prosser, 2014). The shared Central American indigenous history and later experience as Spanish colonies have left the people of Costa Rica and Nicaragua with a common language and lifestyle. This shared history deceptively suggests that integration into Costa Rican society should be seamless for Nicaraguans. However, digging deeper, the long historical tensions between the neighbouring nations in the form of territorial disputes and domestic and foreign policy disagreements reveals itself as a substantial barrier between these two peoples. Costa Ricans commonly attribute the perceived failings of the Nicaraguan politics to its people, whom they fear will bring corruption, poverty, and violence as they cross the border (Sandoval Garcia, 2004). In fact, in the IDESPO (2012) study, the Costa Rican participants when asked how they perceive Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica (see *Figure2* below) have expressed the below: while 40.4 per cent of respondents agreed they are hardworking, 12.5 per cent highlighted negative features of Nicaraguans, 24.8 per cent were ambivalent and 3.8 per cent recognized discrimination, exploitation and rejection of Nicaraguans in Costa Rican society.

Figure 2: *Perceptions of Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica*
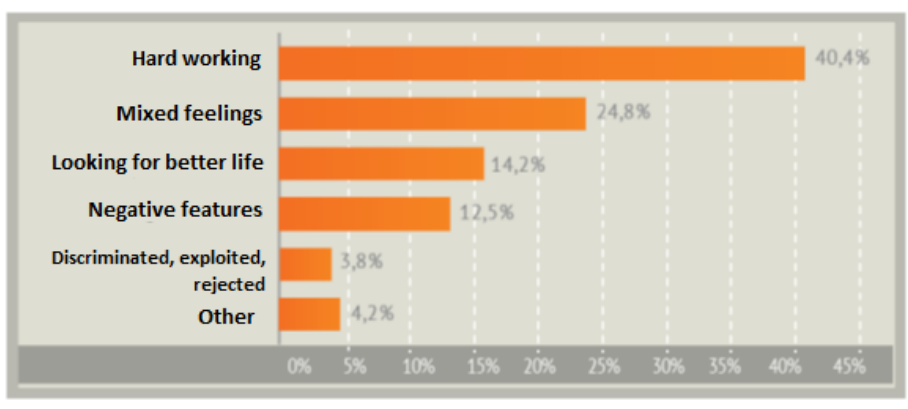
Source: IDESPO-UNA: 2012.

While *Figure 3* illustrates how perceptions towards Nicaraguan immigrants contrast with that of towards North Americans, which presents the perceptions that are generally positive. Almost 50 per cent of the respondents viewed US citizens as investors in their country, while 18.47 per cent stated that immigrants from the US are friendly people and they help others.

Figure 3: *Perceptions of US citizens living in Costa Rica*

Come to invest and improve quality of tourism sector — 45,95%
Good people, kind and like helping others — 18,47%
Proud, self proclaimed superiority — 10,69%
Very rich — 9,30%
Looking for good places to retire — 3,17%
Come to buyo ut our lands and to exploit — 2,95%
Other — 5,47%
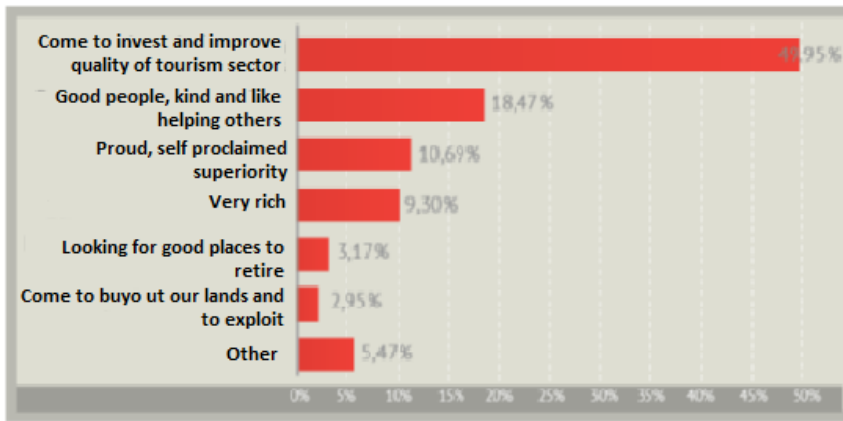
Source: IDESPO-UNA: 2012

This data illustrates how the perceptions of Costa Rican public vary towards these two very different representative groups of immigrants.

While expectations are high for Nicaraguans who reach Costa Rica, the reality presents itself with societal and institutional discrimination, stigmatisation by local population and often exploitation in labour environments. The settlement of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rican territory takes place in very socially vulnerable zones: peripheral regions with scarce coverage of services; in suburbs of the capital San Jose, such as La Carpio (which is known to host a population of which at least 50 per cent consists of Nicaraguans); and in some semi-peripheral cities that experience problems such as being overcrowded, having low quality in services and low income – which leads to social and economic segregation (Brenes, 2003; Rosero, 2004). Consequently, the existence of immigrant ghettos in the aforementioned territories escalates to even more stigmatization from the native population.

However, the attitudes towards Nicaraguans in Costa Rica have not always been as hostile as they are today. Prior to 1990s Nicaraguans have been viewed as a big help in developing agricultural plantations and contributing in other areas requiring workforce in Costa Rica. In the 1990s they have been sheltered with compassion as a consequence of horrendous natural disasters in their home country. It's only after the 1990s, then Costa Ricans have come to realise that Nicaraguans are here to stay that surged xenophobic attitudes and the Nicaraguans, from representing a helping hand in developing Costa Rica's economy, have become the most unwanted "other". I will expand on the reasons for xenophobia specifically towards Nicaraguans throughout the following chapters of this study.

Immigration policies in Costa Rica with a focus on Nicaraguans

Nicaragua are the only Central American country that is required a visa to enter Costa Rica[9]. Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica include legal residents, permitted temporary and seasonal workers, and those who are undocumented. The ability to obtain legal status is one of the main factors influencing an individual migrant's success in a foreign country (Rocha Gomez, 2006). Unfortunately an estimation based mainly on community work suggests that about two-thirds of Nicaraguan migrants do not have regular status in Costa Rica (Sandoval Garcia, 2010). Those with irregular migrant status are primarily women and children. Men are most often the first within families to seek to regularize their migrant status because they must look for jobs while women who are usually responsible for raising children cannot afford the payment for the residency application. The cost of naturalization is an unthinkable amount to most of the Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica.

While the Costa Rican constitution states that anyone living within the borders of the nation, including foreigners, have the same rights and responsibilities as Costa Rican citizens, this does not hold true in practice (Rocha Gomez, 2006). Evidence suggests that undocumented immigrants have a difficult time accessing necessary services, like health care and education for their children.[10] In addition, it is likely that fear of being deported is keeping many immigrants from accessing services.

In 2005 the strict 2005 immigration law was passed emphasizing border security and the removal of 'threatening' individuals by detention and/or deportation. This law gave police officers more power to curb illegal immigration by granting them permission to stop anyone on the streets to ask for documentation (Fouratt, 2010). Shortly after its passage, a few highly publicized raids were conducted by officers going into immigrant neighbourhoods unprovoked to arrest and detain people (Fonseca Vindas, 2005). In 2009, a new revised law was passed which emphasized the integration of immigrants rather than their criminalization (Fouratt, 2010). Punishments in the form of large fines were redirected toward employers who hire undocumented immigrants and language offering protection of the human and civil rights of immigrants was included, though some immigrant advocates were skeptical about the extent to which these reforms had actually been implemented.

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[9] http://www.migracion.go.cr/extranjeros/visas.html
[10] Though services are available, stipulations in the laws make it difficult for undocumented persons to take advantage of them. For example, undocumented workers do not receive insurance for health care, though emergency services are available. Undocumented children may attend public schools, but must provide for their own required uniforms and supplies, and many are not awarded degrees that are necessary to move onto the next level of education, despite meeting the requirements (Rocha Gomez 2006).

Even if irregular status was pardoned, undocumented Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica have little recourses available to legalize their status. Aside from attaining a hard-to-come-by work permit, the most reliable way to obtain residency is through familial links with a Costa Rican citizen; first-degree links, to either a spouse or a child are prioritized. Children who are born in Costa Rica are automatically granted citizenship regardless of their parentage (Goldade, 2007). This native soil policy has contributed to fears of an 'anchor baby' phenomenon in Costa Rica, where immigrant women become pregnant in order to gain legal status in Costa Rica. Some studies of immigrant fertility have shown a three-fold increase in births to Nicaraguans from the early to the late 1990s (Morales & Castro, 1999 cited in Goldade, 2007) proving that this point has some truth in it. Many believe that the policy of 1999, following the devastation of Hurricane Mitch, granting amnesty to 160,000 Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica, thereby allowing them to legalize their residence, also led to an increase in illegal immigration, as many migrants made the decision to come to Costa Rica following the amnesty announcement, only to be denied residency after they could not prove they had been in Costa Rica prior to 1998 (Rocha Gomez, 2006). Many of these people have stayed on, living and working in Costa Rica as undocumented persons with all of the hardship and challenges this status brings.

When it comes to the perceptions and opinions on the role of the State on immigration, Costa Ricans civil society also presents xenophobic tendencies. As a result of the perception that immigration is a problem of public order, and that the country does not have the capacity to receive more immigrants, 73.6 per cent of the people interviewed for the study carried out by David Delgado Montaldo (2008), agree or fully agree that the Costa Rican State shall not accept more immigrants. Despite this, nine out of ten think that the State shall accept only immigrants that support the culture and development *(ibid.).* This represents Costa Rica's selectiveness when it comes to choosing what kind of immigrants they accept and which kind they reject.

Long accused of turning its back on its Central American neighbours, Costa Rica's exclusionary immigration policies help the nation to keep 'undesirable' migrants, like impoverished Nicaraguans, out, while encouraging desirable ones, like wealthy North Americans and European who are seen as an investments into the country's future (Alvarenga Venútolo, 2007). In addition, it has been proven that societies tend to mirror the discourses of the politicians and policies (European Commision, 2006). Hence, while policies of immigration and integration remain austere towards Nicaraguans, it is unlikely

to expect the Costa Rican society is to change its course in becoming more tolerant and accepting of Nicaraguans.

The countless myths about Nicaraguans that circulate throughout Costa Rican society at times seem to be part of a universal narrative about immigrants—that they take jobs away from citizens; they increase crime rates; they overburden social services; and they don't pay taxes. However, most Nicaraguan migrants don't compete with Costa Ricans for jobs, since the labor markets are clearly segmented. Nicaraguans fill niches in the economy that Costa Ricans don't want to do: largely seasonal agricultural activities, construction, domestic service, private security and, to a lesser extent, commerce (Cortes Ramos, 2006).The Costa Rican media has played an influential role in perpetuating stereotypes and inaccuracies about Nicaraguans, particularly regarding their supposed capacity for violence and crime (Fonseca Vindas & Sandoval Garcia, 2006). However, academic studies have failed to find evidence of the veracity of most of these claims that dominate public discourse. Statistics on crimes committed by those of various nationalities shows numbers consistent with population percentages (Sandoval Garcia, 2004).

When it comes to the accusation for using up the social services, the Nicaraguan immigrant population is overwhelmingly young and healthy and the rate of health service usage is about the same as the national average (Gatica Lopez, 2007). Working in informal sector for Nicaraguans is not a question of choice but rather the circumstantial situation strongly supported by exclusive migration policies. Still, sensationalism reigns in Costa Rica making everyday lives of Nicaraguans residing in Costa Rica a struggle for survival and dignity.

This is the context in which this research project will be conducted. The historical and political backdrop of immigration in Costa Rica will help to lead the narrative of this study towards analyzing the Costa Rican national identity formation and its relationship with the Nicaraguans' presence in Costa Rica. It is hypothesized that each national identity is deemed to define who is 'us' and who is 'they'. One of the methods to define these limits is to draw boundary markers. The literature on boundary drawing, especially in the context of national identity, holds that boundary definitions do not just appear without foundation. Historical conditions are important since they shape the cultural repertoire available for boundary drawing (Lamont, 1992). Consequently this means that boundaries are not reconstructed from one moment to the other; they depend on historical definitions of 'us' and 'them' (Bakkær Simonsen, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

This thesis' line of inquiry, uncovering social constructs like 'national identity', 'otherness', 'whiteness', 'belonging' and 'integration' is consistent with its methodological considerations. In particular, the fact that this study deals with persons as members of social groups (Costa Rican nationals as members of Costa Rican society and Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica as members of Nicaraguan immigrant group in Costa Rica), their subjective social realities (Costa Ricans as hosts and Nicaraguans as immigrants) and their subsequent subjective interpretations of these realities (affecting meaning making), reflect in the ontological and epistemological stances taken by this research.

General considerations

Social ontology deals with the "nature of social entities" (Bryman, 2012). According to Searle (2006), these social entities consist of social object (e.g. Costa Rica), social hypothesis (e.g. Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica are excluded from a membership in the society) and social processes and events (e.g. media depictions, local perceptions, immigrants' feelings) (*ibid.).* Regarding the nature of these social entities, a constructivist position is embraced to emphasise that neither of these entities are objective nor have a reality external to social actors; as advocated by objectivist perspectives (Bryman, 2012). The research theoretical approach in conceptualising the complexities of issues regarding 'identity', 'whiteness' and 'belonging' follows similar abductive constructivist logic. From an epistemological point of view, which is concerned with questions surrounding the acceptability of knowledge, an interpretivist position is taken as the objectives of this research centre around a rather abductive understanding of "subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman, 2012). With regards to the interpretivist approach, Howe (2004) adds that it "emphasizes understanding people in their own terms, in their own social settings" *(ibid.).* He continues stressing the connection to qualitative research methods: "[T]heir natural home is within an interpretivist framework with the democratic aim of seeking to understand and give voice to the insider's perspective" (*ibid*). The democratic aim to understand the insider's perspective (i.e. the hardly explored perceptions of Nicaraguan immigrants' belonging in Costa Rica) combined with the "[…] central principle of interpretivism […] that people are constantly involved in interpreting their ever changing world" (Williamson, 2006) frame the overall epistemological considerations embraced for the practical (interviews) and theoretical (chapter on *'Theory and Concepts'*) dimensions of this research. As the theoretical framework was built abductively in order to facilitate and

understand the empirical materials and not vice versa, it was therefore intended to identify the problem that has been observed (discrimination and therefore lack of integration of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica), to then establish a hypothesis (Nicaraguans are discriminated in Costa Rica due to exclusionary Costa Rican national identity construct) that will be examined and consequently justified or rejected as a conclusion of this study. The emphasis is therefore mainly placed on a "democratic understanding" of personal narratives through semi structured interviews as they offer valuable insights into "lived realities" and processes of identity construction of Costa Ricans and how those constructions affect Nicaraguan immigrants' sense of belonging are seen as influential aspects of broader trends of how discrimination can generally affect someone's feeling of belonging.

Assessing whether (and if so, how) host national identity matters for immigrants' belonging building requires not only data on the receiving nation but also individual level data on immigrants. Since Costa Rica does not hold any substantial statistics measuring belonging of immigrants[11], this study will be empirically founded on the semi structured in depth interviews carried out with three Costa Ricans and nine Nicaraguan immigrants.

Research design- the case study of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica

This research is designed as a qualitative case study exploring belonging and integration processes of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica in light of widespread discrimination. Although the term 'case' is usually applied to single locations and settings, such as (geographical) communities or organisations, Bryman (2012) "would prefer to reserve the term 'case study' for those instances where the 'case' is the focus of interest in its own right" *(ibid.).* The study was mainly focusing on the urban areas of Costa Rica, such as the capital San Jose. The study has been carried out throughout a six month period (February to July), three of which (April-June) were spent in Costa Rica.

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[11] For a study of such or similar nature in other geographical area, such as Europe, it would be also beneficial to use database similar to International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) or The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). However nothing even remotely similar exists in Costa Rica.

Figure 4: *Nicaraguan dense areas in Costa Rica, June 30, 2012*
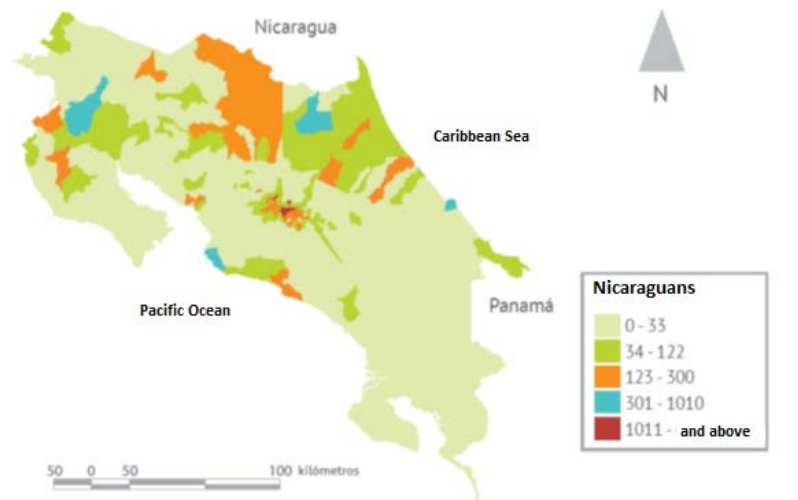
Source: Department of Migration, Costa Rican government

Due to the relatively small sample of interviewees (12) and their demographic biases as well as geographical limitations, no attempts are made to insist on the research's external validity/generalisability or complete replicability. Nevertheless, the general methodological and theoretical outlook allow for valuable insights and tentative suggestions to be made regarding the analysis.

Research method - interviews

In line with the main focus of this research, qualitative, semi-structured interviews are considered an appropriate method to respond to the research question. As narrative inquiry and analysis shift the focus "from 'what actually happened?' to […] 'how do people make sense of what happened and to what effect?'" (Bryman, 2012), this becomes relevant to the study's overall thematic agenda. The purpose of narrative inquiry is to understand the wholeness of human experience through data collected in the form of semi structured interviews. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences (McNamara, 1999). Additionally, interviews are a far more personal form of research than questionnaires in a sense that the interviewer works directly with the respondent and therefore the interviewer has the opportunity to probe or ask follow up questions as well as follow topical trajectories in the conversation that may stray from the guide when the interviewee feels this is appropriate. For the purpose of this study, two interview guides have been developed. Semi-structured interview guide, according to H. Russell Bernard (1988), provides a clear set of instructions for an interviewer and can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data *(ibid.).* They are

often preceded by observation, informal and unstructured interviewing in order to allow the researcher to develop a good understanding of the topic of interest necessary for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions. The inclusion of open-ended questions and training of the interviewer to follow relevant topics that may stray from the interview guide does, however, still provide the opportunity for identifying new ways of seeing and understanding the topic (Cohen, 2006).

In the process of finding potential interview participants, naturally due to the sensitivity of the topic, I have run into cases of rejection speculatively based on suspicion on the motives of this study and potential misuse of the given information. However with the aspiration to bridge the overarching social distance between the researchers and the researched, efforts were made including understanding potential mistrust and considerations of the social settings in which the interviews took place. Apentiik & Parpart (2006) note that especially foreign researchers might encounter difficulties in certain research settings regarding conduct (e.g. clothes, language) and norms (e.g. atypical gender roles), although informal, personal exchanges (e.g. about the researchers' background) preceding the interviews can assist in establishing mutual curiosity and building relationship; as was the case in the interviews carried out for this research. An advantage of being in an outsider's position (i.e. not Costa Rican or Nicaraguan) could also be that a researcher is considered an outsider that doesn't represent any side and participant can feel freer to contribute. In the context of this study, I believe it would not have been possible to carry out this study if the researcher was Nicaraguan or Costa Rican. In this light, being an outsider has helped a great deal since a researcher was viewed as someone neutral in the context of the Costa Rican/Nicaraguan relationship. Regarding the presentation of the research to the respondents, a reassuring and inviting approach was applied in order to establish conducive environment "[...] so that the interview and the situation itself have a meaning for the respondent" (*ibid.*). After the identification of potential participants, the research and its objectives were presented as informal, but as precise as possible in order to inform but also to gain trust of the often skeptical interviewees. In terms of ethical conduct, all participants were briefed on the background of the study purposes. All were asked if the interview can be recorded (all affirmed positive) and were told that the information collected will be anonymised. However, the interviews carried out with two of the participants, namely the government official and the university dean have agreed to have their real names used for the study purposes.

The interviews followed a semi-structured design to allow the flexibility to ask follow-up questions immediately and therefore gain rich and detailed narratives (Bryman, 2012). The in depth, semi-structured interviews were based on the interview guides (see *Appendix 1*) which were formulated specifically with regards to the investigation of the explicit research questions. Starting with few relatively closed questions about background and personal facts, the interviews soon progressed to more open-ended questions as "[…] researchers in the field often know that they cannot find useful or interesting answers by asking direct questions about identity" (Anthias, 2002). Although a critic of the 'identity' concept, Anthias recognises that "[…] it is best to allow subjects to talk about themselves, their lives and their experiences, and their 'identity' will emerge through this narration" (*ibid.*).

While interviews form the methodological backbone of this study by using academic literature and media reports a triangulation of methods was pursued in order to further mitigate their above outlined subjective and constructive nature. Whenever possible in the analysis, cross-references between interviewees were provided to draw comparisons, but also to verify their credibility and suggest potential trends.

As part of the qualitative research design applied for this study, the initial ambition was to carry out personal interviews as an empirical base in order to respond to the research question. Eventually due to the circumstances and being open for the opportunities to get as varied sample as possible, focus group data collection method was incorporated among the semi structured personal interviews. The below table (*Table1*) presents the summary of the participants' details. In terms of sampling method a mixture of opportunistic and snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012) has been employed with great success. Owning to researcher's exposure to a wide array of different groups of population, in terms of nationalities, age, social, economic status, gender and education has provided the study with rich variety of participants. The only prerequisite that was applied for the Nicaraguan participants implied to the length of residence in Costa Rica (five years as a minimum). In terms of geographical location, all interviewees were selected only from the capital, San Jose, due to researcher's location and therefore having more opportunities to access participants, especially due to the short time frame available for data collection. Additionally, as it is seen in *Figure 4*, San Jose has the highest concentration of Nicaraguan migrants. However if we consider geographical data collection area as a limitation, it would have been interesting to continue this study in other parts of the country

in order to identify how perceptions towards Nicaraguan immigrants vary depending on the circumstances outside the capital.

Eventually eight interviews were carried out of which two were focus groups with three participants in each group. All together 12 people were interviewed. Out of the 12, nine were Nicaraguans (with at least five years residence in Costa Rica as selection criteria) and three Costa Ricans. It was aimed at making a sample as varied as possible in terms of economic and social background of participants, as well as age and education wise. Consequently, interviews were carried out with people ranging from ones who have incomplete primary education to the ones with PhD degrees. The sample eventually contained more highly professional participants on the Costa Rican side than on the Nicaraguan. I defend this slightly unequal representation as representative of the landscape of Costa Rica in the sense that Nicaraguans are highly underrepresented among the higher social, academic and professional class in Costa Rica. In terms of gender balance, eight females and five males were interviewed. This also can be justified basing on the fact that female Nicaraguan immigrant numbers are higher in Costa Rica than those of males. Age of the participants ranged between 25 and 82. All participants were of Catholic religion and all native Spanish speakers. All in all the entire study sample represents a wide array of participants which makes the findings wider scoped, however less representative and impossible to generalise. Interviews were carried out from the 1st April through to the 16th May, 2016. Interviews took between 35min and 117min. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and later translated into English while transcribing. All interviews were allowed to be voice-recorded and were subsequently transcribed and then double-checked to ensure accuracy. The transcripts can be found in *Annex2*. To organize the sample results, six thematic areas have been identified that were most relevant in order to answer the research question (Cassell & Symon, 2011). However rest of the information obtained from the interviews that haven't been included in the thematic areas have helped a great deal as supplementary and often more in depth information that provided the findings analysis with profundity. The tables containing thematic areas can be found in *Annex3.* As it is reflected in the table of participants' detail summary (*Table1*), each of the participants was given a code (e.g. first Nicaraguan participant- 'N.1'; first Costa Rican participant- 'CR.1', etc.). This code will be used to reference the quotations used throughout the *'Analysis'* chapter.

A limitation regarding concepts analysed throughout this study is discrimination. Measurements of perceived discrimination remain highly subjective. People perceive

discrimination differently, depending on their attributes, those of their community, and even public discourse on integration in the host country. Victims may not recognise a discriminatory practice when they encounter it or they may, alternatively, attribute to discrimination obstacles or disadvantages that are in fact due to other factors. Self-reported data on discrimination should therefore be treated with caution.

In the process of analysis of the interview findings, a clear dichotomy between 'we' and 'they' has emerged. Adriana Cavarero (2000) writes: "The "*we*" is always positive, the plural *"you"* is a possible ally, the "*they*" has the face of an antagonist, the "*I*" is unseemly, and the "*you*" is, of course, superfluous" *(ibid.).* Her remarks are, to a certain degree, of importance as the respondents of this study inevitably deploy pronouns in their narratives to indicate individuality, collectivity and antagonism.

Table 1: *Summary of interviewees' details*

	Name	Interview method	Sex (M/F)	Age (years)	Profession	Education	Years in Costa Rica (years)	Age on arrival (years):	Religion:	Language:	Reasons for coming to Costa Rica:	Plans to stay in Costa Rica:
Nicaraguans												
N.1	Doña Norma	Focus group	F	30	housewife	primary school	6	24	Catholic	Spanish	economic	yes
N.2	Manuel Antonio	Focus group	M	30	construction worker	incomplete primary school	6	24	Catholic	Spanish	economic	yes
N.3	Vanessa	Focus group	F	25	housekeeper	high school	5	20	Catholic	Spanish	economic	yes
N.4	Doña Vilma	Focus group	F	65		highs school	25	40	Catholic	Spanish	economic	yes
N.5	Doña Maribel	Focus group	F	82	pensioner	primary school	22	67	Catholic	Spanish	economic/ family reunification	yes
N.6	Sandra	Focus group	F	37	student	university (ongoing BA)	16	21	Catholic	Spanish	economic/ family reunification	yes
N.7	Everth	Personal interview	M	29	student	university (ongoing MA)	5	24	Catholic	Spanish	economic/education	maybe
N.8	Maite	Personal interview	F	28	professional/student	university (ongoing BA)	12	16	Catholic	Spanish	economic	yes
N.9	Yescárleth	Personal interview	F	25	professional	university (BA)	24.5	0.5	Catholic	Spanish	economic/political/family reunification	no
Costa Ricans												
CR.1	Junior	Personal interview	M	38	taxi driver	high school	-	-	Catholic	Spanish	-	-
CR.2	Alexander	Personal interview	M	51	professional (dean)	university (PhD)	-	-	Catholic	Spanish	-	-
CR.3	Elma	Personal interview	F	40	professional (government official)	university (BA)	-	-	Catholic	Spanish	-	-

THEORIES & CONCEPTS

The following chapter will present the theoretical and conceptual background for the study. It will soon become obvious that the key concepts and theories, such as national identity, otherness and belonging in the context of Costa Rica are closely related and codependent.

In this chapter I will attempt to capture the essence of the formation of Costa Rican national identity and feature its main characteristics. As key features of Costa Rican national identity I will accentuate the importance of concepts of whiteness and the process of racialization. It will be consequently demonstrated that important part of Costa Rican national identity is constituted of exclusion strategies and creation of the otherness which in a given context is racialized in order to facilitate its exclusion. This analysis will lead to the culmination by identifying the boundary markers deriving from Costa Rican national identity which acts as obstacle of integration of those who do not fit into the ideal framework of Costa Rican national imagery.

CONSTRUCT OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

After outlining the background narrative of Nicaraguan immigrants' stand in contemporary Costa Rican society, namely being the most discriminated immigrant minority my aim is to investigate the origins of these discriminatory attitudes. Given that stereotypes widely applied to Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica are not based on true facts, one needs to explore deeper what then makes them the most 'unwanted' in the Costa Rican society. I will therefore turn to the concept of national identity, in particular, the Costa Rican one, as a mean to test the statement made by David Delgado Montaldo (2008): "a level of integration of an immigrant does not depend only on his/her personal characteristics – they depend heavily on the amount and quality of the rights and duties they are provided by the recipient society which highlights the point that the reception can influence migrant's capacity of integration at great lengths" (*ibid.).*

As touched upon in the introductory chapter, in order to understand how attitudes and perceptions towards Nicaraguans in Costa Rica or, in contrast, attitudes towards immigrants from the Western countries for instance have originated, it is necessary to study Costa Rican national identity, analyse how and by who it has been constructed and what limitations does it possibly identify in order to include/exclude migrants, but most importantly antagonize Nicaraguans, who one could think, are otherwise so similar to Costa Ricans.

Identity is a multifaceted, historically and socially constructed concept that constitutes of qualities, beliefs, and expressions that make a person (self-identity) or a group (such as national identity and cultural identity) different from the others (Weinreich&Saunderson, 2003). The formation of one's identity occurs through one's identification with significant others, primarily with parents and other individuals during one's biographical experiences, and also with 'groups' as they are perceived. These 'others' may be benign - such that one aspires to their characteristics, values and beliefs (a process of idealistic-identification), or malign - when one wishes to dissociate from their characteristics (a process of defensive contra-identification) (*ibid.*). Identity among many others can refer to cultural, ethnic, social, individual, national etc. This study however is dedicated to studying identity as a national paradigm. The concept of national identity will be perceived to a large degree as a social construct. It has a functional use for this study in the sense that it entails linking the population in question (Costa Ricans, but also Nicaraguans as an opposing pole) to the state (Costa Rica) and thus making national identity a necessary connection to "imagined community" (as per Anderson, 1936). National identity is also explained as a product of a common: history, geographical location, traditions, language, ethnicity and values. According to Ernest Gellner (1983), the state is a social construct as well as political principle claiming that "the political and the national unit should be congruent" (*ibid.*). That is to say that optimally there should only be one ethnicity within the state so that the political boundaries are not crossed. Additionally, a certain amount of homogeneity is required of a state for it to function which could be achieved for instance by organised education *(ibid.).* However, as Gellner himself points out, state and ethnicity being the same is a utopian idea, as many more potential nationalities exists than there are actual states *(ibid.).* Nationalism binds people together in a common cause, directing loyalties from family, religion and local community to the larger cause of the nation (Eriksen, 1993; Smith, 1991). However, according to Gellner, the nation should not be perceived as in any way natural or destined, rather, it is nationalism that takes pre-existing cultures and transforms them into nations (*ibid.).* Efforts to understand nationalism have been useful in explaining how large populations of people, often quite culturally different from one another, unite as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983). According to Benedict Anderson, the phenomenon of nationalism arose with the origins of widespread printed languages, which spread knowledge and ideologies that created a feeling of commonality between peoples. Language therefore is held to function as an important identity marker both for collective as well as individual identity. It can also be seen as an important factor

for the feeling of belonging (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1992). As Michael Billig (1947) has argued, the grouping and distinguishing between languages is closely connected to nationalism and can be seen as a nationalist construct. This construct supports the idea of a community, which speaks a common language constituting a nation (Billig, 1995). According to Benedict Anderson (1936), a nation is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Despite that the nation is imagined in Anderson's terminology, he emphasizes that it does not mean that the nation is imaginary and thereby not actually there (Anderson, 1995). The imagined quality is marked because of the fact that despite members of a nation never possibly meeting and knowing each other, in their minds they are still able to imagine themselves as connected. The state is envisioned as limited because it always entails, no matter the size of the state, that it has a boundary, which separates it from other states beyond that boundary *(ibid.).*

In contrast to the above arguments, Anthony D. Smith (1939) argues that the nation is neither a primordial unit nor a fully modern phenomenon and therefore disagrees with previously reviewed arguments by scholars such as Gellner and Anderson (Smith 1986). Instead, Anthony D. Smith argues most nations have ethnic bases, ethnic communities or "ethnies", which they have developed from (*ibid.).* This is not to say however, that all ethnic communities necessarily develop into states. Smith defines the ideal type of an "ethnie" as "a named community of shared origin myths, memories and element(s) of common culture, including an association with a specific territory" (Smith, 2002). The nation is defined as "a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (Smith, 1991). For the ethnic community "myth and memories carry importance because they indicate a common past and heritage" (*ibid*, 2002). According to Smith, national identity is characterised as a *culture community*. Members of these communities use references to perceived common history and memories as well as myths, symbols and traditions in order to construct themselves as homogeneous. The common history as well as common culture are taught and thereby passed on through public education and mass media, by telling and teaching everyone the same myth. Thus a common ideology of the nation's people is created and it serves as a connection between them.

Much attention in the social sciences has been paid to the role of governments in promoting nationalist sentiment in order to manipulate citizens' actions to suit the purposes and interests of the states. But some theorists with a more primordial orientation to identity

feel that there may be something more to it; they question the ability of this manipulation of identity to evoke such strong emotions as patriotism, that motivate people to defend and care for their land. Even in cases where immigrants are permitted into society by the state, i.e. they are granted citizenship, it takes, according to Anthony D. Smith (1991), several generations before they are fully adopted into the nation by means of the socialization process of education and mass media *(ibid.)*. For instance public education helps to construct the members of nation as nationals and citizens. It also establishes a bond between the individuals by reminding them of their common heritage utilising shared values, symbols and traditions such as for example flags and the national festivities. Though accounts of group's history or culture may be flawed, exaggerated, or purposefully fabricated, they are widely shared and form the basis for the intense solidarity that individuals have towards the nation and its citizens. Nationalist discourse is often infused with nature-inspired metaphors that invoke the rootedness of national identity, and the naturalness of being in one's homeland. In this view, immigrants are thus people who are "uprooted" from their place, anomalies in the supposed order of the world, and a problem that needs to be resolved (Malkki, 1992). This view carries moral implications that feed into ethno-nationalist sentiment in immigrant-receiving nations such as Costa Rica (Prosser, 2014). According to a Costa Rican academic Carlos Sandoval Garcia (2004) who has studied Nicaraguan-Costa Rican relationship on various occasions, in Costa Rican context national identities are imagined communities but also and perhaps more importantly they are formations constructed on the basis of difference and inequality *(ibid.)*. National identities, according to Sandoval Garcia, might be interpreted as different meanings of belonging and are often related to the senses of origin, continuity, and destiny. These meanings are not natural but can be socially naturalized and taken for granted, since they are imagined by specific social groups through diverse cultural practices and rituals as a relatively unconscious activity *(ibid.)*.

Metaphysical ethnic nationalism

In the literature on Costa Rican national identity, the analysis of a discourse by Alexander Jimenez (2002) in his essay "The Impossible Country of Philosophers" is of special interest for this study. The inclination throughout the critical investigation carried out by the philosopher is to emphasize the "falsehood" or "decorativeness" *(Jimenez, 2005)* of the Costa Rican identity that reduces the country to idyllic landscapes, and gives rise to

"narcissism of minor differences" *(ibid.),* which allows attacking and discriminating against those who are very similar [to Costa Ricans], contesting the popular rhetoric about them being radically different *(ibid.).* The philosopher coined a very appropriate term to refer to this Costa Rican classic national identity concept- the "metaphysical ethnic nationalism" which is defined as a "supposedly social democratic political project whose main function is to differentiate Costa Rica from other Central American republics and celebrate their uniqueness based on certain vague and imprecise features" *(ibid.).* A. Jimenez mentions a few of these identity concepts indoctrinated by educational system in Costa Rica: "national soul"("alma national"), "to be Costa Rican" ("ser costarricense"), or "national essence"("esencia nacional") *(ibid.).* According to A. Jimenez, these elements are considered a result of rational reflection which has derived from the seemingly unquestionable ethnic homogeneity of the population (*ibid.).*

The practical problem A. Jimenez claims is that the development of this national imaginary has not encouraged the development of genuinely egalitarian and inclusive Costa Rica. A partial explanation is that this discourse is strongly supported by politicians who lack historicity and often attribute almost bio-genetic origins in order to help the aims of boosting national pride (*ibid.).* It is important to remember that discourses regarding national cultures and national identities in Costa Rica have been constructed and reproduced by the groups that have been in control throughout its history, namely mestizo-European descendants in Central Valley. Indeed, the liberal imaginary wanted to instill that Costa Rica has been an egalitarian and democratic place from the colonial times, even though during the time of this imagery's creation, strong processes of differentiation and exclusion took place and as a matter of fact is still taking place now in the day. Between 1948 and 1980, the two key ideas of "Tropical Paradise of Central America" and "Switzerland of Central America" were invented. The *exceptionalism* of Costa Rican land has been perceived and reported as a "haven of democracy, justice and peace" while comparisons were made with respect to neighbouring nations who in the same historical time have been suffering from wars and violence. In this view, the democratic political system is conceived as a natural result of the racial homogeneity of the population (Jimenez, 2005).

This discourse according to A. Jimenez has constructed certain ethnic boundaries, developed only in the Central Valley, while the most ethnically diverse populations live in the geographical margins of the country. The indigenous population were applied a strategy of historical oblivion, placing them away from the white civilization and making

them part of natural landscape; and people of African descent, a once necessary work force for carrying out megaprojects such as railroad construction, were isolated in the outside of the national identity boundaries *(ibid.*).

Today the process of forming the Costa Rican national identity continues to be based on imagined national ideas such as being different from the rest of Central America, cultural homogeneity, European ancestry, democracy, pacifism and equality (Camacho, 1997). The imagined community of Costa Rica is a discourse reproduced from official circles of power, intimate daily reality at homes, in classrooms and through the media. These ideas are often indifferent to statistics, genetic and sociological evidence especially when it contradicts the ideals of Costa Rican national identity that is recognized as white, peaceful, democratic and ecological.

In regard to the above, the researcher Carmen Murillo (1995) points out that cultural identities always have certain amount of ethnocentrism as a resource for recognition *(ibid.).* This cultural centrism can be positive, when the identity references are exalted, self-recognition is supported and many migratory processes have contributed decisively to the development of the country *(ibid.).* However, in Costa Rican society a clear division has been established between 'desirable' migration (i.e. Europeans, North Americans, whites, investors) and 'undesirable' migration (i.e. workers from the rest of Central America, Africa and Asia). The colonial settlers' projects in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries favoured 'desirable' immigration of white ethnic groups (eugenic migration), while the unwanted immigration eventually became essential to execute large projects such as railway construction and development of large agricultural territories (Alvarenga, 2008) by making Costa Rica a relatively developed country as it is now, but 'disturbing' the supposed and desired whiteness.

Jimenez claims that Costa Rican national identity has been formulated in the nineteenth century and hasn't changed much even since, meaning that many aspects of the concept despite being outdated are still widely used in nowadays Costa Rica.

Personal nationalism

Once a person enters a foreign land, he or she becomes a foreigner and he or she is given a preconceived identity which is produced by the past experiences, perceptions and constructed representations in locals' mindset. Therefore, foreigner's nationality becomes an important basis for their new identity in the receiving country.

To understand the Nicaraguan identity attributed to so many Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica, it is useful to examine the concept of "personal nationalism"—the tendency of characteristics associated with a nation, and with the people of that nation, to become aligned (Cohen, 2000). In personal nationalism, the traits associated with a nation are transferred onto people who come from that nation. Nicaragua and Costa Rica have held long-standing disputes and rivalries at various points in their histories which have induced the design of oppositional national identities (Sandoval Garcia, 2004). Identifying itself as a pacifist nation, Costa Rica contrasts itself with what it sees as a war-ravaged and bellicose Nicaragua. Consequently, Nicaraguans are viewed as violent and aggressive. The poverty of the Nicaraguan nation, with the lack of well-established schools, hospitals, and infrastructure is also transferred onto Nicaraguans, who are thus seen as ignorant, uneducated, diseased, and dirty. In the Costa Rican imagination, the political turmoil and bad governments throughout Nicaraguan history have become so embedded in Nicaraguans' image that they like their leaders are too considered thieves, murderers and liars. All of these negative associations that Costa Ricans hold against Nicaragua and with Nicaraguans are then contrasted with the image Costa Ricans hold of themselves and their countrymen, those of being peaceful and passive, healthy and well educated; Costa Ricans are said to be naturally fair and just; they look forward to the future, instead of looking backwards (Biesanz et al., 1999). Historical and recent events are used to demonstrate the reasonableness and progressiveness of Costa Ricans. Costa Rica's national hero, Juan Santamaría[12] symbolizes the tico's[13] self-sacrificing nature. President Óscar Arias' Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating the end of the contra war in Nicaragua is held as an example of the superior tico-style of non-violent conflict resolution. As evidence of their charitable nature, ticos promote the idea that their large public social programmes for health and education are open to all who cross into Costa Rica, and that they should be models for the rest of the world to emulate (Prosser, 2014).

Any evidence that supports these representations—for example, a violent crime committed by a Nicaraguan, is highlighted extensively in the news, and is repeated in public discourse in the form of rumors and jokes (Ramírez Caro, 2007). Meanwhile crimes committed by Costa Ricans are quickly forgotten in the public imagination; in fact, often the nationality of an offender is not even noted unless that person is Nicaraguan (or a member of some other small minorities like Colombians, Panamanians, or Hondurans). Symbols of

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[12] In this legend a young, poor mulatto dies to protect his countrymen and women along with his nation's sovereignty.

[13] Tico is a colloquial term for a native of Costa Rica. Has no negative or positive connotation.

Nicaraguan poverty and depravity, like the neighbourhood of La Carpio, a squatter settlement located near a public landfill, have come to represent the entire Nicaraguan community (Fonseca Vindas, 2005). Furthermore the Nicaraguan identity is essentialized as the one that is thought to 'run through the blood', thus meaning that a person cannot 'get rid of it', even upon naturalization of citizenship in Costa Rica (Sandoval Garcia, 2004). This identity has been formed and imagined in the Costa Rican nation and solidified through media representations which are reproduced in everyday language and interactions between people (Ramírez Caro, 2007).

During the last years a proliferation of stereotypes about Nicaraguans in Costa Rica has been widespread (UNBOUND, 2015). In addition to the sensationalists reporting on Nicaraguans in the media, the source of jokes about Nicaraguans has reached all-encompassing proportions. This particular form of passive vilification has become popular in Costa Rica because it allows racial discourse to permeate everyday life, even amongst a supposedly conflict-averse people like ticos (Ramírez Caro, 2007). The use of humor can cloud the ideological implications in a statement about difference. For example, partaking in ethnically-charged humour allows one to deny their own racism, because their words are "only a joke". In this manner, someone listening to, or repeating a joke can distance him or herself from the true racists—those who openly speak badly about immigrants or minorities (*ibid.*).

National identity as a boundary marker

National identity is also a boundary marker which determines who is included into the in-group and who is not. One of the most relevant similarities between subject formation and the construction of national identities is that both are represented through the accentuation of differences regarding the other (Williams, 1989). As Billing (1995) maintains: "Those differences between members of the same category are minimized and differences between categories are exaggerated" *(ibid.).* In this particular case, modes and topics through which Nicaraguans are excluded express the aspects that Costa Ricans consider undesirable in their own society (Erdheim, 1995). Norbert Elias (1994) suggests that these relations between outsiders and those who are established can be conceptualized as power differentials between groups without necessarily reducing the explanation to the psychological or biological dispositions and attributes of those involved *(ibid.).* Sandoval Garcia (2002) analyses the Costa Rican identity in opposition to the fundamental 'other' in the recent history of the country- the Nicaraguan immigrant who are seen as a threat to public health and social order. For this author, Costa Rican national identity is purposely

constructed in difference and opposition regarding Nicaraguans: "the sense of difference is a powerful way to build a sense of community" (Sandoval Garcia, 2002).

In the context of the historical processes throughout the twentieth century, the idea is that while Costa Ricans manifest as a homogeneous population in their characteristics of peace, freedom, democracy and whiteness, consolidated Nicaraguans were depicted in exactly the opposite character, such as: crime, war, political radicalism and being dark skinned (*ibid.).*

In short, recently Costa Rica is undergoing a severe political and economic crisis. But more important than declines in real wealth have been the blows to Costa Rican national identity (Townsend Bell, 2009)*.* In essence Costa Rica has become more and more "Central Americanised" (Seligson, 2002) which indicates the loss of so much promoted *exceptionalism*. At this point Nicaraguans come in as necessary attribute for "explaining" the downfall of welfare system and economic challenges that Costa Rica is facing in recent years.

According to Maykel Verkuyten and Borja Martinovic (2012), national identity can be ethnic or civic (*ibid.).* I claim Costa Rican national identity is more of ethnic than civic nature which makes the integration of ethnically 'other' groups such as Nicaraguans next to impossible. Cross-national research has shown that the relationship between national identification and prejudice toward immigrants is higher in countries where national identity is represented in ethnic terms, like in many European countries as well as in Costa Rica, compared to countries in which a civic representation predominates (like in United States or Canada) (Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009). Ethnic representation emphasizes genealogical grounds, defines group ownership, and often implies a static cultural view in which native traditions and symbols need to be protected against change. In such representation, the legitimacy of national membership is denied to non-native members making it difficult for immigrants to feel included and to develop a sense of belonging (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012).

RACIALISED COSTA RICA

In the section on national identity, it has been highlighted on several occasions that race and whiteness are of particular importance while formulating the definition of Costa Rican national imagery. This is also something that differentiates Costa Rica from most of European countries in a way that in Costa Rica racial or ethnic background of a foreigner is perhaps more important than his/her cultural and linguistic proximity to the host society,

which are by far the most important criteria required to be met in order to belong in European societies. Furthermore, the social hierarchies based on race and white superiority complex are relevant to all Latin American countries.

Racial and ethnic discrimination is common in Latin America where socio-economic status generally correlates with perceived whiteness, while indigenous status generally correlates with poverty, lack of opportunity and lower social status. It is fair to say that in contemporary Latin America the discourses of various cultures such as traditional indigenous and afro Caribbean are recognised but in practice discriminatory process are taking place and 'stand in a way' of so called dominating and superior cultures which can be named as "white", "Latino" or "European".

Throughout this study concepts 'race' and 'racialisation' are understood and operationalized within a social constructivist framework and are inspired by post-colonial feminist studies and critical race and whiteness studies (see Essed and Goldberg, 2001; Miles, 1989). This means that concepts like whiteness and race are seen as socially constructed and continuously produced. They are always relational and embedded within historicized power relations and structures, and are therefore always negotiable and never final (see, e.g., Hubinette and Tigervall, 2009). From this follows that race is socially constructed bodily concept (Vitus & Andreassen, 2015). Throughout this exploratory section it is attempted to trace the evolution of notions of race and whiteness in Costa Rica and its relationship to national identity.

Robert Miles (1991) notes that racialization "refers to the historical emergence of the idea of 'race' and its subsequent reproduction and application" (*ibid.).* Racialization is a work of ideological representation under which biological or cultural characteristics are deployed to signify a sense of difference (Gilroy, 1987). Racialization might also be understood as a way of associating certain groups with a particular "nature" or "essence" that identifies them despite the internal differences present in any group and the similarities between the racialized group and those who construct such categorizations. Racialization works by associating a certain nature with certain biological attributes (skin colour, for instance), but also by defining some sort of essence (violence, for example) though cultural attributes, such as those related to nationality (Winant, 2000). Sometimes "biological "and "cultural" categories are combined, since the meaning of "race" is unstable and politically contested, combining representational elements and institutional dimensions *(ibid.).*

The racialization of the "other" also has implications for representing the self, the most crucial of which is the invisibility of whiteness as a missing center from which other groups

are represented. As Richard Dyer (1997) states, "whites are not of a certain race, they are just the human race" *(ibid.).* Their power lies in their invisibility. This emphasis on racialization does not suggest that it is the only way of constructing images of otherness. Its relevance in this context lies in the fact that often it has been argued that in Central America issues regarding racial differences do not hold the same relevance as for instance in United States where patterns of segregation are well known, obscuring the pervasive racialized inequalities in Central American societies.

Exclusion and racialized representations are also related to economic and material inequalities. This dimension seems to be crucial for an interpretation of national identities. Immanuel Wallerstein (1991), for instance, has shown that material inequalities and racist representations have been linked historically. Endless capital accumulation occurred in the context of colonial expansion; hence those forms of economic exploitation and racialized representations of internal (working class) and external others (colonial people) have been closely interwoven phenomenon. The crucial consequence of these links between material factors and representations of the other is the fusion of socioeconomic category with an anthropological and moral category (Balibar, 1991). One may also argue that being defined as an 'immigrant', based on ethno-racial stereotyping, cements one's position in the lower social strata of society *(ibid.).* The most concrete example of 'denied belonging' may be expressed in terms of labor market discrimination – immigrants are not getting employment, or far below their qualifications, because of their origin. Such boundaries of belonging impede integration in socio-economic terms and cement social exclusion in ethnic/racial terms. A recent study by Edward Telles (2014) on ethno-racial classification, inequality and discrimination in Latin America shows that economic and social inequalities are at least as much related to skin color as ethnic identification (*ibid.).* Status hierarchies with roots in colonialism operate worldwide based on the underlying racist logics of 'the more light-skinned, the better' affecting people's opportunities in society and, ultimately, integration processes where immigrants are stratified based on differences in terms of skin color, ethnic culture and/or religion.

In the image that Costa Rica attempts to portray to the world, and perhaps more importantly, to itself, black, Chinese, indigenous, and Nicaraguan populations disappear from the national scene to be replaced by an idealistic and white-washed nation. However, I argue that Nicaraguan ethnic minority is necessary for creating an image of a cohesive Costa Rican national identity.

'OBSESSION' WITH WHITENESS

As it has been made apparent in the anterior section, whiteness is a repeatedly evident element of Costa Rican national identity. In Costa Rica, Nicaraguan immigrants seem to be excluded from whiteness and even visualized as an opposite of whiteness. Based on this I hypothesize that whiteness is one of the strategies used by Costa Rican national imagery construct in order to exclude Nicaraguan immigrants from Costa Rican in-group. In this section a brief discussion on theories of whiteness will be presented, later moving on to addressing whiteness specifically in the Costa Rican context and how it manifests in policy and majority attitudes specifically towards Nicaraguans.

Whiteness studies are multifaceted discipline inspired by post-structuralism and post-colonialism, and provide insights into the way in which race and culture, as social constructs, are attributed with different privileges (Dyer, 1997). Whiteness acts as a neutral and unrecognized component of identity; while "blackness becomes converged with being oppressed, whiteness is converged with the privilege of normalcy" (Twine, 1996). This normalcy and lack of recognition are thought to define white culture, which is identified with majority culture because this white/majority culture is thought to be defined as indistinct and empty (Lipsitz, 2006). Dalton Conley (2001) concurs: "Ask any African American to list the adjectives that describe him, and he will most likely put 'black' or 'African American' at the top of the list; ask someone of European descent the same question, and 'white' will be far down on the list, if at all." *(ibid.).*Yet the notion that whiteness is empty rests on at least two problematic assumptions: that culture only belongs to racial groups, and that clear lines differentiate racialized peoples internally and externally (Rasmussen *et. al.*, 2001). It is difficult to sustain such assumptions within a Central American context. Whiteness has been equally central in the Central American context, whether via processes of mestizaje[14] or whitening (Garner, 2007). Studies of whitening projects in Central America and its eventual ramifications are abundant (Andrews, 2004; Yashar, 2005). Often taken to mean the physical process of race mixture and lightening, whitening can be taken as a much wider project, denoted as the process of becoming "more urban, more Christian, more civilized, less rural, less black, less indian . . ." (Whitten, 1981). National projects to whiten the nation have varied in terms of their form, success, and extent. Costa Rica is often perceived as one of the more "successful" cases (Townsend Bell, 2009).

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[14] Mestizaje refers to racial and/or cultural mixing of Amerindians with Europeans, Since the race has been a significant factor in social standing, mestizaje has been invoked to remedy social inequality and the misfiring of democracy.

In Costa Rica up until recently there has been three major ethnic minorities- afro Caribbean, indigenous and biggest immigrant minority- Nicaraguans. To explain how Costa Ricans came to accept afro Caribbean people who were the "others" throughout several centuries, social democracy can be employed. Namely while Costa Rica's national identity continued to be predicated on whiteness, the concept was expanded to include democraticness (Sharman, 2001). In other words, social democratic mission could not be accomplished if there remained a black population that was actively discriminated against. Hence, it is not that Costa Ricans began to think about blacks differently, or to embrace them more, but because 'civilized (e.g. white) people did not discriminate in such barbaric ways' *(ibid.).* Meanwhile indigenous populations have been put in the category of nature and eradicated from the national image of Costa Rican society. The narrative regarding Nicaraguans is somewhat different. As it will be explained more in depth in the section on *'The Necessary Other',* Nicaraguans are considered necessary for accentuating the *exceptionalism* and superior nature of Costa Ricans and for explaining the recent setbacks of Costa Rican economy and welfare state.

It has been highlighted already that homogeneity (as rural farmers or small landowners and white descended ancestors) is a key to Costa Rica's self-image, indeed to its societal ethos (Monestel, 2005). Yet, this homogeneity is not limited to physical whiteness. Instead it is geared around Costa Rica's "idiosyncrasies," those traits that both define the nation and differentiate it from the violent and backwards Central American "other" (Mitchell and Pentzer, 2008; Sandoval Garcia, 2004). Its whiteness is defining and excessive. As Trevor Purcell (1999) writes: "Modern Costa Rica has been publicly regarded as a "white" country in contrast to the rest of Central America. Its general demographics and predominant culture reinforce the image of Costa Rica as not only European but more particularly as the most Caucasian, Castilian, and Catholic country in Central America" (*ibid.).*

Indeed, Costa Rican identity has undergone an updating process whereby peace and democracy have come to define it as much as physical racial purity. As Carlos Sandoval Garcia (2004) claims "national identities in Costa Rica have been characterized by essentialist representations that highlight an idyllic sense of the past, a "white" population, and a prosperous middle-class and a stable democracy as key sources of belonging *(ibid.).* Hence whiteness has been broadened, theoretically, to include all who conform to notions of culture, class, and civility (Townsend Bell, 2009) which, according to general perceptions, media depictions and political rhetoric, Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica do not represent.

THE NECESSARY 'OTHER'

This section will focus on the aspect of exclusion in the form of constructing the 'otherness'. It is an assumption that in contemporary Costa Rica, Nicaraguan immigrants have become a symbol of an outsider who does not fit in within the image of the 'desirable' in Costa Rica.

According to Sanders Gilman (1985): "Without an outside, what is inside would not make sense, and the opposite is certainly true" (*ibid.).* Thus, identity and difference are closely related. Gilman notes that "because the 'other' is the antithesis of the self, the definition of the 'other' must incorporate the basic categories by which the self is defined *(ibid.).*

In Costa Rica, national identity framework seems to expel those attributes that do not fit into a desired nationhood. The hegemonic version of Costa Ricaness has been constructed as a predominantly white middle class population located in central geographic areas of the country. In other words, national belonging involves not only recognition of certain identities but also misrecognition and non-recognition of internal others, for instance, indigenous peoples, blacks and peasants, who do not belong to the city, which is seen as a symbol of modernity. However the most visible 'other' in Costa Rica now in the day is a Nicaraguan immigrant (Sandoval Garcia, 2004). Consequetly those attributes that do not fulfil the desired national identity are projected onto excluded others. This kind of projection results, as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (1986) argue, in a conflictive fusion of power, fear, anxiety, and desire in the construction of subjectivity *(ibid.).* Usually, societies, under particular historical conditions, select a certain number of categories onto which they project their anxieties (Gilman, 1988). The subjective dimension of national identities is frequently represented as a preservation of national frontiers, as a projection and protection of an internal collective personality. They are frequent icons that consider the nation as a home, as a place of security (Balibar, 1991). Nicaraguan citizens in Costa Rica are frequently depicted a threat to public health; there also are border disputes between the two governments in which each nation is menaced. In other words, the body and the nation are represented in similar ways; both are threatened by outsiders. Although the formation of nationhood in Costa Rica is not exclusively related to Nicaraguans, what makes the latter crucial 'other' is that, historically, their representation has articulated racialized, class-based, and gendered abjections (Sandoval Garcia, 2004). Additionally, recently, immigrants from other countries in Latin America suffer the same stigma that used to be allocated primarily for Nicaraguans. One only needs to analyse the image promoted in the media about certain criminal acts in

which Colombians, Dominicans, Jamaicans, Haitians and Mexicans are involved. This proves that the concept of 'otherness' is a shifting one in a sense that the object of 'othering' can change depending on the context and it is determined not on the premises on who is actually different but who is the most unwanted in that given setting. Constructed primordiality also recognizes that identities are never formed in isolation. An individual's or group's identity always emerges in relations to others and in the context of specific opportunities and constraints. Kevin Yelvington (1992) emphasizes the role of opportunities and constraints in his paraphrase of Karl Marx: "People invent their ethnicity, as they invent their history, but not exactly in ways which they please" *(ibid.).* Cornell and Hartmann (1998) also capture the contextuality and relationality of identity through a focus through the interplay of assignment and assertion. Identity and belonging can be and are assigned by organizations, states, census bureaus, politicians and social groups. Individuals and groups however are not merely passive recipients in the process. Identity and belonging are something "that people accept, resist, choose, specify, invent, redefine, reject, actively defend, and so forth" *(ibid.).* Also inherent in the concept and practice of belonging is the related reality of fear of not belonging. Individuals, groups, nations and so on understand and define who they are by specifying who they are not. Identity, in other words, always relies upon an "other", and belonging to "us" necessitates the existence and recognition of "them". Belonging, as such, necessitates and implies boundaries. The boundaries may be social, cultural, political or economic in nature and depending on the individual, the group, and the context will range in importance or centrality from very low to very high. Schools for example can constitute sites and sources of bounded belonging. So too, can language or religion. Socioeconomic status, or class, is yet another dimension of belonging (Croucher, 2003).

BELONGING - INTEGRATION - (CITIZENSHIP) - SOCIAL COHESION

Once a migrant makes a decision to reside in a foreign country with no plans of returning to his/her original country, one can assume belonging, whether it's emotional, social or political, becomes an aspiration that a migrant would be striving to attain. However this study aims to demonstrate that often it is not only up to a migrant but also to a receiving society and host country's policies how cumbersome this process can result to be. I claim that stigmatization and xenophobia towards specific groups of migrants based on socially constructed all-encompassing imagery can take over the realities and make it next to

impossible for excluded groups to become part of the community; as it seems to be the case with Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica.

This chapter is intended to connect previously analysed Costa Rican national identity with the concept of otherness and demonstrate how boundary markers deriving from the concept of Costa Rican national identity affects Nicaraguan immigrants' feeling of belonging. I thus claim that national identity draws boundary markers which determine how porous or closed the access to inclusion is for immigrants. Costa Rican national identity throughout this study is considered to be a limited set of features which makes it difficult to include the outsiders, and even more, the outsiders who are considered to be the unwanted 'others'.

In this study, I claim that belonging is part and the end product of the integration process. The researched literature distinguishes different aspects of integration, like structural, cultural, social, and emotional integration (Gordon, 1964). I share Penninx and Garcés Mascareñas' (2014) definition of integration as 'the process of becoming an accepted part of society' *(ibid.).* This social change is produced as people with diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds interact, and affects all parties involved; ethnic minorities and the national majority. Penninx and Garcés Mascareñas argue that the receiving society, as the main party defining the rules and norms for this interaction, may facilitate or impede the integration process depending on factors that determine how the receiving society's institutions work, as well as the attitudes of the majority population towards immigration and ethnic pluralism. However, as Penninx and Garcés Mascareñas (2014) point out, the mainstream into which immigrants are expected to merge is often not clearly defined. What is meant by integration? To function in a society?; to have a job?; to speak the language well? Depending on the integration model, the strength of the national identity and how homogenous is the receiving society, it could also be required 'to become Costa Rican'. Then, the complex task would follow to define 'Costa Ricaness'.

It is often assumed however that immigrants' identification with the host society, i.e. a sense of belonging, is the last and least important step in the integration process. National identification would only be concerned with private feelings and symbolic actions without any substantive social consequences. Despite that, it has been proved that national identification does have consequences for labor market outcomes (see Nekby & Rodin, 2007), educational achievements (see Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006), and for group relations in particular. Many studies have shown that group identification is a critical causal factor in the ways in which people react and respond to members of their own group (in-

group) and members of other groups (out-groups) (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002). Thus, national identification is not simply the last or least important step but can influence different aspects of integration (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012).

The OECD (2012) has established reasoning for why every country should strive to maintain their societies cohesive. As OECD defines, cohesive society is a society that "works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers prospects of upward social mobility" (ibid.). As such, social cohesion is both a desirable end and a mean to achieve inclusive development. Evidence shows that social cohesion has an intrinsic value in itself as citizens see it as part of their own well-being and progress of society, and that it contributes to more inclusive, stable, long-term growth (ibid.).

As a goal, social cohesion is a continuous process, just like development. Furthermore, social cohesion is not a luxury reserved for countries that have achieved a certain level of development. It should be an objective in itself just as growth and development, as it can reinforce and sustain development efforts. As a mean, social cohesion enables citizens to live in societies where they enjoy a sense of belonging as well as trust, which makes policies more effective through a virtuous circle between a widely accepted social contract, increased citizens' willingness to pay taxes and improved public services (ibid.). This positively influences the state's ability to raise income, which can then be invested in public services and programmes.

Individuals have a basic need to feel to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and tend to act to secure acceptance as in-group members. We live in a world of nations and not only assimilationists, but also proponents of multiculturalism argue that feelings of belonging together are necessary for national solidarity, a unified society and effective democracy (Modood, 2007). A society needs unity and cohesion. A sense of common belonging and shared national identity is an important aspect of this. Most immigrants want to belong and try to develop attachments and commitments to the country of settlement. Research that examines the conditions and processes that stimulate or hinder immigrants' national identification can provide leads for the development and implementation of adequate social policies (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012)

Integration of immigrants is perhaps the most explosive topic in contemporary societal debates in migrant receiving societies (Martiniello & Rath, 2010). In Costa Rica, concerns about securing national unity and cohesion from bursting numbers of Nicaraguans have led politicians, debaters and large segments of the public to question Nicaraguan

immigrants' suitability for their new community, presenting their integration more often as 'failed' than successful (Goodman, 2010). Despite the concerns about the issue in public debates, scholarly attention to the affective dimension of integration – that is, whether immigrants identify with and feel that they belong to the host nation – has been sparse and the word 'integration' itself avoided. Despite the lack of research on the phenomenon of belonging, it can be claimed that belonging is considered a basic human need (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Fiske, 2004). Its denial is often noted as a reason for people to develop reactionary identities which may lead to extremism and radicalisation as it has resulted in some of the Western societies (Hartmann, 2011). In addition to the positive effects on individual well-being, widespread belonging to a common national identity should, on the societal level, increase community cohesion and encourage cooperation among newcomers and established majorities (Brubaker, 2004). The study of belonging thus seems a much needed addition to the functional agenda which has hitherto preoccupied empirical research on immigrant integration. Motivated by the heated public discussions regarding the place for newcomers in their adoptive nations, one of this studies core concerns is the impact of the Costa Rica's national identity on Nicaraguan immigrants' feeling of belonging. The focus on the host nation's identity is not intended to deny that many individual level factors may also affect the degree to which immigrants identify with the new community. For purposes of this study, however, I consciously restrain attention to these factors in order to spotlight the issue of how belonging might be complicated or facilitated depending on how newcomers are received by their hosts.

The concept of belonging in this project is viewed as a dynamic notion, which depends on time, space, location and site. The feeling of belonging can differ in one's own perception or how others perceive one. One can belong in an emotional, social, ethical and political way. The concept of belonging is therefore complex and one can have a dual or even multiple belongings. Belonging is rarely either or, - one can be in a position in between. Yet even though sociologically belonging is perceived variably, it can also be understood as fixed and formalised for instance by institutions, as in the case of citizenship, symbolising that you belong legally to a country. The Israeli scholar Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) defines belonging as an emotional attachment; as a feeling to be. According to Yuval-Davis the feeling of belonging is dynamic and can constantly change however it can be classified into three aspects: the emotional (people's identification and emotional attachment to various groups), the social (concerning social locations) and ethical or political (referring to ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own

and others belonging). Those aspects of belonging are interrelated and cannot be reduced to only one (*ibid.*). She states that it is not possible to define people to either belong or not to belong, as the feeling of belonging can be different depending on time, space, location and situation. This is why it cannot be constructed as fixed, as it is often done by institutions. Also she claims that the feeling of belonging differs very much on your own perception and the perception of the others, e.g. your own perception can be that you belong to a certain group, but the group itself does not see you as part of it (*ibid.*). She also states that regional, ethnic, racial, religious differences might be crucial signifiers of belonging and citizenship (*ibid.*) In terms of citizenship as formal belonging, Yuval-Davis sees it as the participatory dimension to a political community. She claims that citizenship comes with certain rights, as in civil, political, social, cultural, spatial and security rights (*ibid.*). Citizenship should not be seen limited to state citizenship, but to be understood in the participatory dimension of membership in all political communities (*ibid.*).

Belonging should be analyzed both as a personal, intimate feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion∕exclusion (politics of belonging) (Antonsich, 2010).

Even though Nicaraguans' mother tongue is Spanish (as well as it is for Costa Ricans) and the fact that they practice the same religion have the same likes, cultural and sport practices as those of the native Costa Rican population evidently does not mean that the coexistence of these two nations do not face challenges. According to John Crowley (1999), the cultural and linguistic similarities that natives have with the most numerous immigrant group do not set the feeling of belonging to a society at all (*ibid.*). Below I will provide one possible explanation.

Identity and belonging goes both ways. Identity can be invoked to refer to the collective perception of a group of individuals, based on some quality such as ethnicity, gender, or national belonging (among others), but identity is also a construct that can be used to define how an individual person sees him or herself, and/or how that person is perceived by others. Identities can be self-ascribed or other ascribed and they can be characterized from multiple perspectives, both by in-group or by outgroup (Prosser, 2014).

Not to belong is to be constantly vulnerable to the accusation of trespassing, even when in legalistic terms it is utterly groundless. The term 'belonging' is a vague one, and according to John Crowley, this is precisely its usefulness (Crowley, 1999).

As Ernest Gellner (1983) has ascribed, the boundaries of a national community are not identical with the territorial borders of the state and indeed has in many respects no content at all *(ibid.).* However from Europe to North America to Australasia, the vocabulary of 'belonging' is a key component in political discussion on integration. However while the term itself is not new, it is little used as an analytical or theoretical tool. Broadly speaking 'belonging' in ordinary language and in political discourse on integration has positive connotations that express a kind of common sense communitarianism: it is presumed to be both a good thing for people to belong to groups, and a good thing for groups that their members belong in a way that is not purely formal. Specifically belonging is distinguished from a formal membership (such as nationality) in that it involves reciprocal relations between members, and not simply relations between the members individually and the group regarded abstractly or institutionally. Belonging, in other words, resonates with commitment, loyalty and common purpose. In striking contrast a concept used academically means essentially the same thing, but its connotations are generally negative, at least in the context of the state or the nation as they relate to migration and integration: a context in which to speak in terms of belonging is often regarded as articulating, whether or not intentionally, a form of xenophobic or racists exclusion. The reasons for this difference are easy to identify. A characteristic feature of anti-immigrant discourse has been attempting to define certain categories of immigrants as 'not belonging' and to justify, on this basis, restrictive immigration rules, strong pressure towards self-conscious cultural assimilation and the desirability of selective repatriation. Consequently there has been a natural tendency among those opposed on political intellectual or moral grounds to anti-immigrant discourse to look with suspicion at the vocabulary and concepts of belonging, including related terms such as membership, integration, national identity, etc. (Crowley, 1999).

By trying to measure how strongly/weakly are long term Nicaraguan immigrants belonging in the Costa Rican society and on the opposite side of the inquiry- what determines long term Nicaraguan immigrants' belonging in Costa Rica according to Costa Ricans, I used a boundary marker approach (Barth, 1969). This approach enables the comparative evaluation of the impact of different boundary conceptions. I will examine six boundary markers, understood as criteria of national membership: national ancestry; being of the national religion; length of residence in a receiving country; birthplace; language skills; having host's national citizenship. These boundaries were defined based on various studies on the general national identity building and not deriving specifically from Costa

Rican national identity model. Hence it will be interesting to witness how Costa Rican national identity measures in terms of universal (and maybe more European model) national identity boundary markers.

It is of course an empirical question how immigrants perceive each of the six markers, but theoretically they seem to vary in rigidity with some appearing to allow for easier boundary crossing than others. Thus, the ascriptive markers such as of ancestry, religion, birthplace, and the length of residence in a host country can be expected to constitute a rather rigid boundary and hence lead to more difficult prospects for immigrants to develop feelings of belonging. Language skills and having host national citizenship appear to be more attainable. If a community attaches great importance to those four criteria in the national self-understanding, it may be understood to reflect a readiness to include immigrants on the condition that they acquire the relevant marker. If this is true, immigrants' belonging should be greater.

Dividing the boundary markers into groups of ascriptive and prescriptive boundaries is one method. Another method could be dividing those markers into majority attitudes and policy. This study however won't focus on boundary drawings based on policy that are more formal and elite-formulated (such as citizenship), instead it will rather emphasize those of majority attitudes. Majority attitudes constitute national boundaries as formulated in ordinary people's conceptions of who belongs to 'us' (Bakkær Simonsen, 2016). Since belonging is a feeling which stems from perceptions of having a place in a community, I expect the attitudes that meet immigrants in everyday life to be of utmost importance to prospects for identifying with the host nation. Appreciating the complexities of national identity, I follow up on Bail's (2008) path to disentangle the boundary concept in order to add analytical sensitivity to the many standards by which Nicaraguans in Costa Rica may be distinguished as 'other'. In this, I suggest the concept of boundary markers to denote the ideas prevalent among members of the native population about what is required to be a true national. These ideas take form of criteria by which immigrants may be included or excluded.

As an additional mean of achieving integration, I will rely on Contact Hypothesis developed by Gordon Allport in 1954. His theory suggests that "interpersonal contact between members of different racial or cultural groups can reduce prejudice and increase positive attitudes toward each other" (Matejskova & Leitner, 2011). Through interpersonal contact, the members of different groups are exposed to the other groups and their cultures. They also gain more knowledge about the other culture, which can foster understanding and can

reduce prejudice (*ibid.).* However, the quality of this intergroup contact also plays a vital role and certain conditions can make the contact more optimal such as common goals between the persons from different groups, an equal status between them, as well as a lack of competition (*ibid.).* This implies that superficial contact is not enough to establish positive attitudes of the *'other'.* With regards to the Contact Hypothesis it can be said that "exchanges that have so called "acquaintance potential" and lead to the formation of long-lasting friendships" (Dixon, *et al.,* 2005) are desirable. Furthermore the chances of reducing prejudices are higher, when the person one has positive contact situations with, is seen as representative of the out-group itself (*ibid.,* referring to Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

ANALYSIS

In order to answer the research question: *How boundary markers of Costa Rican national identity affect the belonging of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica*, the two interview guides were designed: one for interviewing Costa Ricans and the second - for Nicaraguan migrants. Additionally, the interview guide was specifically altered once interviewing government official as this interview had more representative rather than personal nature. The interview guides can be found in *Annex 1*. Here I will analyse the findings that have derived from the interview answers and researcher's observations.

THE 'OTHER' IN COSTA RICA

In line with the collected data, it hasn't been difficult to pin down that Costa Rican national identity has been identified by the interviewees as a strong construct built centuries back: *"The invention that Costa Ricans are superior is a historical process" (*CR.2, 23:09, own translation), nevertheless now in a day historical Costa Rican national identity construct has been acknowledged as prominent as it has ever been. Deducting from the whole of the Costa Rican national identity concept, the specific boundary markers for inclusion or exclusion of migrants have been identified from the content of the collected data. Eventually the possible implications for migrants as well as local society of not being able to leap those boundaries will be outlined.

Firstly, it is important to confirm some key hypothesis of this research. One was whether Nicaraguans have actually been identified by the study participants as a population receiving a significant amount of discrimination. The answer to this was unanimously affirmative. Interviewees, both Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans have vigorously established than Nicaraguans are the group most discriminated amongst immigrants in

Costa Rica; as one of the Nicaraguan participants has expressed: *"In this country we are the most rejected. They don't want us here."* (N.2.2, 27:04, own translation). As a proof, personal stories of discrimination shared by participants were numerous. Practically all Nicaraguan participants had a story to share when asked about discrimination. Everth, a Nicaraguan student in Costa Rica, has shared a number of discriminatory experiences he has gone through. He was also contemplating about the situation Nicaraguans are in in terms of putting up with these negative attitudes towards them:

> *"I also have read in various studies that in general Costa Ricans perceived Nicaraguans as an inferior ethnicity. And it is true. And one cannot escape this. I lived it myself and I have spoken to many other Nicaraguans who have similar experiences. But since they come here without rights and their families back in Nicaragua rely on them for the remittances, they put up with this discrimination."* (N.3, 07:39, own translation)

This shows how migrants in vulnerable situations (i.e. irregular migratory status; being the only provider for family back in Nicaragua, etc.) even while experiencing discrimination are powerless to protect themselves, allowing the discrimination to become a normal practice. Another story Everth has shared represents institutional discrimination:

> *"One day I was queueing for a bus and I could see police looking at me. And I thought: 'these are coming after me'. And that was true. They came to ask for my papers. Once I showed my ID they said: 'A! You are Nicaraguan [with emphasis]'. I said: 'Yes, why?' They asked me what I was doing here and if I had a visa. I showed them my passport and they saw I also had a visa for the US. So they asked me: 'Is this a fake visa?' I confirmed that it is real. So they ask me again: 'How is it possible that 'nica' has a visa for the US?!' I immediately felt discriminated. I explained them the process but they still couldn't believe me. It hurts me a lot how there is so much open institutional discrimination here."* (N.3, 1:25:22, own translation)

This example demonstrates how discrimination in Costa Rica is not just a societal phenomenon but it is prominent among the formal State's structures too.

Maite, another Nicaraguan participant, had similar stories of discrimination as a publicly acceptable practice. Asked if it is common to witness discriminatory attitudes towards Nicaraguans in Costa Rica, she answered:

> *"Yes, you can see a lot of it. Even among lecturers at universities. It happens often that lectures say: 'here we can speak honestly' and they start talking negatively about Nicaraguans. I tell them: 'I am Nicaraguan'. And then they are a little embarrassed. That upsets me because they [lecturers] are people who have a lot of influence on their students and if they speak negatively about Nicaraguans, students think that it is ok to discriminate Nicaraguans."* (N.4, 57:58, own translation)

As Maite and Everth were saying, this type of institutional racism is so entrenched in the Costa Rican society that it is not even considered racism. It is supposedly jokes but really it is a way to discriminate without taking the responsibility of one's words. This particular form of passive vilification has become popular in Costa Rica because it allows racial

discourse to permeate in everyday life (Ramírez Caro, 2007) without being accused of being racists, i.e. non- democratic.

Yescárleth, a young Nicaraguan professional shared a touching story about her childhood in Costa Rica and how she grew up thinking that "*being Nicaraguan is bad"* (N.5, 02:24, own translation). She was explaining that only when she went abroad, she realised that "*<…> it is only in Costa Rica that being a Nicaraguan is seen as a bad thing"* (N.5, 29:04, own translation) and that there is a place in the world where she can be valued for who she is rather than "*being unwanted and discriminated"* and that the label of *"bad Nicaraguan"* was pegged on her only in Costa Rica. Her experience abroad made her realise *"that this stigma of being a Nicaraguans is not part of [her] and that it is part of Costa Rica and Costa Ricans who imposed it on [her]'.* This experience, according to her, made her "*much more confident",[she] stopped being so very shy and felt like [she] could stand for [herself] and stand for [herself] when people speak badly about [her] or other Nicaraguans"* (N.5, 37:58, own translation*).* This eventually inspired her to look for opportunities to move abroad where she could be considered equal. This and other stories of discrimination act as evidence to illustrate the fact that Nicaraguans besides being the biggest minority, having presence in the country for centuries and being culturally and in many other ways similar are very much an excluded part of Costa Rican society both on the society's, institutional and personal levels.

Before delving into analysis of the findings on reasons for discrimination towards Nicaraguans it is also important to look into general picture the interviewees provided of the perceptions of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica. While grasping what are the most commonly pronounced perceptions towards Nicaraguan immigrants, it has become evident that very few have mentioned any positive traits that Nicaraguans are commonly attributed with. Some have recognized characteristics like hard workers, having strong family values and being humble; however this came just as a backdrop for the most outstanding traits which were grossly negative and often exaggeratedly prejudiced. These will be detailed out in the analysis below.

Related to the above and as part of this research, it was also important to identify on what specific grounds Nicaraguans are discriminated. According to Everth, a Nicaraguan participant: *"In general Costa Ricans' perception on Nicaraguans is that they are inferior. I would say at least 80 per cent of Costa Rican population has a negative opinion about Nicaraguans."* (N.3, 12:48, own translation). Another Nicaraguan interviewee Yescárleth

had following description when asked what Costa Ricans think about Nicaraguan immigrants:

> *"Chauvinistic, violent, not educated, steal jobs, indigenous [negative connotation]. Nicaraguan is always perceived to be poor. And they are always grouped into one entity. Nicaraguans are like animals that kill without much thinking."* (N.5, 43:17, own translation)

During the data collection, there certainly has been a lot of emphasis on Nicaraguan Spanish as an identity marker which, in the context of this study, is evidently functioning as a marker used for exclusion. There was a unanimous opinion that Nicaraguan accent is one of the most outstanding markers by which they are firstly recognized and consequently excluded. Alexander Jimenez, a dean at University of Costa Rica said:

> *"Accent is the strongest marker to recognise Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. Maybe even more than the skin colour, the Nicaraguan accent is what is being picked on by Costa Ricans. Most of prejudice is based on the accent and specific words and phrases that Costa Ricans find appalling. There is a claim that they don't speak good Spanish. There are tons of TV shows that mock Nicaraguan accent."* (CR.2, 59:26, own translation)

After being asked why exactly Nicaraguan Spanish is being looked down in Costa Rica, Alexander found it difficult to explain. As he seemed to think, it is not that Nicaraguan Spanish is grammatically incorrect. As an example to confirm that dislike for Nicaraguans Spanish is not based on Nicaraguan Spanish genuinely being less 'correct', Alexander Jimenez said: *"<…> for example, Cuban accent, which phonetically speaking is more different from Costa Rican accent and has more incorrect grammar use causes no problems in Costa Rica."* (CR.2, 1:10:02, own translation). This statement confirms that there is something else with Nicaraguan Spanish that puts Costa Ricans off. He eventually came to say this:

> *"<…> these accents [Nicaraguan and other Central American] are 'barbaric', not refined, not educated. In Costa Rica one of very important national identity images is education. As part of the colonial mentality, we have to look like our colonisers, Spanish and later other Europeans; to follow certain mannerism. And these people from the rest of Central America, they don't take care of how they speak, they shout, they don't pronounce words right. They [Costa Ricans] associate it with lack of education, not being refined, not being civilised."* (CR.2, 1:06:30, own translation)

To add to the above, while talking to a government official Elma Bejarano, I have tried to question the reasons for Costa Ricans' dislike for Nicaraguan Spanish too. When she gave me similar to Alexander's explanation, I have asked her to compare the reaction to mistakes Nicaraguan's make while speaking Spanish with those made by non-Spanish speaking foreigners, like myself. She then gave me this answer:

> *Interviewer: But I never received any criticism or negative feedback on my foreign Spanish…*

CR.3: It's because you are white, blond, with blue eyes. It doesn't matter how good your Spanish is. For you everything is forgiven. (CR.3, 40:57, own translation)

As per Michael Billing, language is held to function as an important identity marker both for collective as well as individual identity (*ibid*, 1947). Therefore language is an element which is easy to employ as a tool to exclude someone who doesn't perfectly replicate (i.e. has a different accent) the same language. These and many other examples that could be drawn from the interview results show that it is not that Nicaraguan Spanish is truly inferior, but it is what it represents and what it symbolises that Costa Ricans do not accept and tolerate. In contrast, as the quote above demonstrates, Spanish spoken by Western non Spanish speaking foreigners is always regarded as an additional effort to integrate and is appropriated forgiving reactions. This confirms the preference to a 'white man' which as the theory has established stems from the colonial history of Costa Rica (as well as other post-colonial Latin American countries).

Very seemingly important reason for discrimination towards Nicaraguans in Costa Rica according to the interviewees was the perception of Nicaraguans as being poor. Many times asked how to distinguish a Nicaraguan, ticos told me: *"As soon as you see someone dressed in rugs (i.e. badly dressed), looking poor and dark skin colour, you will know he/she is Nicaraguan".*[15] As a consequence of this and similar statements heard from Costa Ricans, it was interesting and sad to catch myself thinking: "*he/she must be Nicaraguan*" each time I see a person who looks poor. Alexander Jimenez expressed the opinion confirming this stereotype: *"I think one of the reasons for xenophobia against Nicaraguans is them coming from poor and poorly educated background."* (CR.2, 1:26:07, own translation).[16] The study participants have continuously mentioned phrase *'Nicaraguans bring poverty'* that is commonly used in Costa Rica. This type of evidence demonstrates the fear that Costa Ricans have about their 'prosperous', 'paradisiacal' image being stained by 'poor' Nicaraguans.

However, as a counter argument for 'Costa Ricans do not want migrants from Central America', Alexander has provided an insight into another case of immigration in history of Costa Rica- El Salvadorians who migrated to Costa Rica during the civil war (1979 -1992). He claimed that this wave of immigration has been received without much xenophobia. Given the earlier established point that Costa Ricans do not easily accept their Central

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[15] statement heard on various occasions from various people, own translation.
[16] As if there are no ticos that live in slums, do lower class jobs and are living in poverty. In fact, there are many Costa Ricans who live below the poverty line, according to World Bank, 21,7 per cent in 2015 (http://data.worldbank.org/country/costa-rica).

American neighbours, this wave of immigration was an exception and, according to Alexander, that was due to the highly educated nature of the immigrants that arrived as well as the fact that they came in small numbers:

> *"As an example of migration that didn't produce xenophobic reaction from Costa Ricans was migration form El Salvador. However it wasn't so big in numbers and population that arrived were mainly highly educated."* (CR.2, 1:25:20, own translation)

This point establishes that the perception of poverty (as well as lack of education which usually comes hand in hand with poverty) as a feature of the majority of the Nicaraguan population acts as a reason for prejudice that converts into one of the boundaries that do not allow Nicaraguans to become part of the society in Costa Rica. Immanuel Wallerstein (1991), for instance, has shown that material inequalities and racist representations have been linked historically especially in the colonial societies. The crucial consequence of these links between material factors and representations of the other is the fusion of socioeconomic category with an anthropological category (Balibar, 1991).

Leaving the stereotypes aside, it is a fact that there certainly are Nicaraguans residing in Costa Rica who are educated and well established (although it is sad truth that majority are not). When asked whether Nicaraguans that are in better social conditions receive less discrimination, many participants have admitted that life is easier for the ones who are better off than for the ones who find it hard to get by. For instance Yescárleth confirmed: "*Yes, if you are professional at least you are good at something.*" (N.5, 45:50, own translation). However, several have stated that prejudice towards Nicaraguans is so strong that social status doesn't eliminate the negativity '*Nicaraguan*' label represents. Yescárleth confirmed: "*Even if you have a certain value, you always feel like no matter what you do, you will never be equal to Costa Rican. You will always be different, be less.*" (N.5, 17:27, own translation). This represents the width of the division between the local population and Nicaraguans as well as evidencing the height of the boundary that a Nicaraguans have to cross in order to be accepted in the society regardless of their actual abilities. This feature of Costa Rican/migrant relation can be compared to some situations in Western European societies, where a migrant (especially the *'undeserved'* one) has to invest much more effort than a native (or a *'deserved'* migrant) in order to be included.

One of the named reasons for discrimination Nicaraguan immigrants face in Costa Rica is being a biggest group among the immigrant minorities. Usually big groups receive more discrimination because they are applied an additional negativity of quantity supported by scaremongering rhetoric. Typically the biggest minority is used as a general symbol of (unwanted) immigrants because they are the easiest to pin point and cast an additional

'threat' of *'taking over the country'*. They also tend to receive prejudice of all negative traits that outsiders (i.e. immigrants) represent. For instance, Vanesa, a Nicaraguan domestic worker, sees big numbers of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica as an explanation for being the most discriminated: "*Now there is more discrimination because now there are more Nicaraguans here than ever before.*" (N.1.2, 18:48, own translation). While Manuel Antonio, a Nicaraguan construction worker was talking about Nicaraguans being measured out with most of negative stereotypes in Costa Rica: "*It makes me angry because I try hard to do my best and then one fool does something and we all look bad. It affects our image in the society but also while looking for jobs.*" (N.1.3, 51:06, own translation). As per section on '*The Necessary Other'* the concept of 'otherness' is a shifting one in a sense that the object of 'othering' can change depending on the context and it is determined not on the premises on who is actually different but who is the most unwanted in that given setting. In a current given setting, the most unwanted ones are Nicaraguans, but that does not necessarily mean that given there would be a change in migration or internal relations scenario, another perhaps the newly biggest group would become the most unwanted.

Another prominent stereotype about Nicaraguans which is often vocalised in Costa Rica is them being violent. Junior, a Costa Rican taxi driver, poured out with a xenophobic rant:

> *"They are violent, they are like animals. It is because they don't have education. You know, no one really goes to school in Nicaragua. They live in war and have lived like that for years. So for them killing families and families of Costa Ricans is normal. You will see, on the news they tell us everything. These Nicaraguans… I don't even go out anymore. I am scared. They go to bars; they drink and become even more aggressive. They drink and then they want to fight. It's so easy to get stabbed in Costa Rica by a Nicaraguan nowadays."* (CR.1, own translation)

This stereotype, as it has been discussed in theory chapters originates from the stereotypes based on Nicaragua's violent history and Costa Rica's media's 'promotion' of an image of a Nicaraguan as a criminal.

Another prejudice towards Nicaraguans in Costa Rica is that they use up social services, such as health and education. This is a very commonly used xenophobic rhetoric that is replicated through most of the xenophobic countries in the world. As well as factual proof presented throughout this research, all the participants except from Junior have agreed that these prejudice are scaremongering and has nothing to do with real facts. However, most have admitted that regardless of factual inconsistency, the vast population takes it for granted.

It was also documented that sometimes discrimination takes place even in the absence of any reason. Among other told stories, the interviewed 82 years old Nicaraguan lady has shared her experience of the appalling treatment she has been appropriated from the Costa Rican public:

> "*They call me 'crazy old women'. They tell me I shouldn't be here; I should be in my own country. This happens in public transport, in shops; without any reason, just for being Nicaraguan.*" (N.2.3, 01:39, own translation)

To explain how and by whom the negativity towards Nicaraguans is infused, besides media being the most powerful transmitter of false stereotypes and prejudice, participants have named public opinion and the State all together transmitting the prejudiced information that translates into discriminatory attitudes towards Nicaraguans. This goes hand in hand with the statistics outlined in earlier chapters (*Figure1* in chapter on '*Migration in Costa Rica*'). While media being the most important source of information regarding immigrants, the statistics show that perceptions towards immigrants in the media and in the press are predominantly negative (*Figure 2* in section *'Nicaraguans in Costa Rica'*). In addition, several other sources inflicting negative attitudes were named during the interviews, such as political relations between the two countries and discrimination against Nicaraguans as a historical tradition in Costa Rica. As for political confrontations affecting Nicaraguan migrants living in Costa Rica, Maite, a Nicaraguan professional has indicated:

> "*<…> I also think it's for our president (Daniel Ortega[17]) who is a bad representative. What he has done is creating a conflict with Costa Rica and Costa Ricans often use his politics as a representation of all Nicaraguans. I feel that he feeds into this discrimination against us.*" (N.4, 13:42, own translation)

Vilma, a Nicaraguan domestic worker, attributed discriminatory attitudes to the historical tradition that takes through generations:

> "*I think it's something that has been transferred from their [Costa Ricans] parents. Because there are people who never had a problem with anyone from Nicaragua, but they are told from above 'these 'Nicas' are bad, they are like this and like that'. And parents are teaching their kids to dislike Nicaraguans.*" (N.2.1, 02:42, own translation)

Manuel Antonio illustrated his opinion on how Nicaraguans in Costa Rica are grouped into one entity regardless of their differences and merits by using a metaphor: "*Ticos say we are like tadpoles. We are all the same.*" (N.1.2, 37:34, own translation). Yescárleth adds onto this highlighting the effect this stereotyping and prejudice could have:

> "*I think I'm looking for a way how I can get rid of this label of being unwanted and discriminated that I have pegged on me here. I want to be taken for who I am which I*

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[17] Daniel Ortega has been repeatedly accused of corruption and dictatorship.

*haven't been able to achieve here, despite being raised and educated here and all my friends and my life being here."(*N.5, 29:04, own translation)

Summing up the above findings it is evident that prejudice against Nicaraguans in Costa Rica are so deeply entrenched (by media, State, politics, society and traditions) that it would require a behaviour change, new policies and majority attitudes to eradicate it.

According to the interview results, another and perhaps the most important reason why Nicaraguans are the most discriminated immigrant minority in Costa Rica is indeed the exclusionary nature of the Costa Rican national imagery. Yescárleth has said:

> *"<…> to understand why there is discrimination towards the Nicaraguans it is also important to understand how Costa Ricans see themselves. Nicaraguans do not fit in this image. <…>"* (N.5, 24:19, own translation)

Even the government representative, a Costa Rican Elma, has acknowledged:

> *"<…> But all in all it is not Nicaraguans' fault that they are the most discriminated minority in Costa Rica. Its Costa Rican national imagery that is xenophobic and excluding."* (CR.3, 46:32, own translation)

This quote takes us to the next section of this analysis which presents the findings on the theme '*Costa Rican national identity'*.

EXCLUSIONARY COSTA RICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Another hypothesis set out in the premises of this thesis is linked to the Costa Rican national identity. In the below it is aimed to evaluate whether the construction that has been laid out in the theory section of this thesis reflects the opinions of the research sample and whether the construct of the national imagery of Costa Rica (negatively) affects the attitudes towards Nicaraguans.

To validate the importance of national identity for the studied topics (i.e. discrimination, boundaries for integration and belonging etc.), Alexander Jimenez has stated: "*National identity is a very powerful tool. It's a fabrication and it's not necessarily based on any real facts, but it is very powerful.*" (CR.2, 45:06, own translation).

Almost all participants have quoted self-proclaimed nicknames of Costa Rica, such as '*Switzerland of Central America'.* Undoubtedly, associating oneself with a country like Switzerland, a synonym of prosperity, wealth and progressiveness, indicates very high opinion of oneself or one's country. Costa Rica therefore does indeed, judging from the interview findings, consider itself superior and exceptional, especially in the context of Central America. Asked about if Costa Ricans perceive themselves as exceptional and superior in the region, 100 per cent of the respondents replied positively and with fervor.

The quote by the government representative Elma who is Costa Rican is just one of the examples I came across during the interview process: *"I think Costa Ricans have their self-esteem too high. They think they are the best in the whole of Central America. We think that we are white! That's ridiculous!"* (CR.3, 41:30, own translation). Everth, the Nicaraguan student has added: *"Totally! [consider themselves superior] Costa Rica doesn't even consider itself part of Central America."* (N.3, 26:03, own translation). Maite, a Nicaraguan professional has added to the argument by highlighting that by feeling superior, Costa Ricans look down on the rest of the countries in the region:

> *"Yes, very superior and very exceptional! And most of all I think it's people who never been abroad, or never been abroad to other Central American countries and are only following the image that politicians and media transmit about Costa Rica- that it is the best country. They are in their bubble and even though they have no idea about the countries outside Costa Rica, they think they know it all and they are the best."* (N.4, 33:37, own translation)

There have been many similar statements and they all confirm that there is a strong consensus about Costa Ricans being superior and not being part of Central American region. This has been very evident not only while collecting the data for this study but also throughout my everyday life in Costa Rica.

As part of the superiority narrative, it is common for migrants to be assigned a role of scapegoat used to explain any type of misfortunes. It is certainly the case in Costa Rica when Nicaraguans (and occasionally migrants from other neighbouring countries) are used as culprits to explain current economic, social and crime problematics in Costa Rica. According to Junior, a Costa Rican taxi driver:

> *"Costa Rica used to be such a beautiful safe country, now with 'Nicas' everything is changing. They are like a plague. It's dangerous, crime everywhere, no jobs. Life has become really difficult for us, Costa Ricans. 'Nicas' can go back to their country, we don't need them here."* (CR.1, own translation)

As well as superior and exceptional, Costa Ricans were described as classists, xenophobic, excluding and racist. When asked whether Costa Ricans like foreigners, Maite has responded: "*Costa Ricans are very classist, it depends on the foreigner"* (N.4, 08:50, own translation). Elma, the Costa Rican from the State's Migration Department, said: *"Costa Ricans are very xenophobic. Not so much towards white people, but a lot towards Nicaraguans."* (CR.3, 39:17, own translation*)*. Alexander, another Costa Rican participant, also admitted exclusiveness as a self-proclaimed trait of Costa Rican mentality:

> *"Costa Rica is an exclusionary society in general- against indigenous, against disabled people and against Nicaraguans. <…> In general, groups that do not look successful or prosperous become unwanted and are eventually marginalised."* (CR.2, 46:56, own translation)

Evidently, continuing the line of inquiry presented in the previous chapters of this thesis, this superiority feeling is highly linked with the idea of whiteness. Alexander has presented the historical example of how Costa Rican elites that traditionally have been predominantly white had been in charge of constructing the national imagery:

> "*Costa Rica always had an obsession with European immigration. In the second half of the nineteenth century, in the narrations of travelers it was very evident that there were many Europeans invited and paid by Costa Rican government to write stories about how prosperous and 'white' Costa Rica is in order to transmit these reports back into Europe, so that Europeans would want to come to Costa Rica and do business with Costa Rica. <…>.*" (CR.2, 33:39, own translation)

In order to unravel the origins of this "*obsession over Europe" (ibid.),* Alexander has provided the below explanation:

> "*Costa Rica is a colonial country that stayed with the colonial mentality up until now. After colonialism, instead of developing a reactionary mentality, they[Costa Ricans] have developed the necessity to look like their conquerors."* (CR.2, 48:38, own translation)

To add more evidence on the points made about Costa Rica not considering itself part of Central America, historically Costa Rica has only been willing to compare itself with countries like Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, *"Only because these three countries are the ones who have biggest numbers of European immigrants in Latin America"* (CR.2, 35:25, own translation). This shows how historically and nowadays Costa Rica has been looking outside of the region and disassociating from its neighbours. Alexander points out racism as a main reason why Costa Ricans reject Nicaraguans:

> "*Even though people don't want to accept it, I think one of the biggest reasons why people do not accept Nicaraguans is a fear that they will disturb the white (self) image of Costa Rica and with the process of intermixing Costa Rica will become darker."* (CR.2, 44:52, own translation)

Following on with the above, another hypothesis indicated in the previous sections of this study has suggested that Costa Rican society is strongly racialized and that the ethnicity, in the sense of race, is used as definitive feature while prescribing who is a desirable and who is an undesirable migrant. While processing the evidence it is important to note that racism is a controversial topic, and in Costa Rica, in a way similarly to some European contexts such as in the Nordic countries, racism has become and invisible concept claiming that there is no race (Vitus & Andreassen, 2015). I have faced some participants becoming less expressive when the topic was brought up. This was most often the case while talking to Nicaraguans and participants from lower social classes. It could have also been a question of a sensitivity of the topic that prevented people, especially those who possibly are the victims of such discrimination, to speak out. Other thinkable reasons

could've been the political correctness as a feature of Costa Ricans society (as have been detailed out earlier). Alexander contemplated by including his own personal experience:

> *"<…> people avoid talking about it. Even academics and especially in Costa Rica, people find it very difficult to acknowledge this tendency. It seems like a politically incorrect topic, like as if it doesn't go well with the idea of democracy and therefore no one wants to talk about racism. I've had issues with this myself. People tell me I don't love this country because I talk about how racist we are as a country."* (CR.2, 25:15, own translation)

On the other hand I have witnessed strong manifestations and confirmations that this topic is crucial for understanding the exclusion of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica and Costa Rican national identity in general. These types of comments were more common among highly skilled professional Costa Rican participants. Alexander explains racism's history and development in Costa Rica:

> *"This [racial] image was created in ninetieth century when Costa Rica entered international market of coffee production. In order to gain more credibility they intended to create the image of white Costa Rica. At that time UK and France were extremely racist, so Costa Rica did this to 'please' them. This was to mark the difference towards the outside of Costa Rica, but also towards the inside, after the arrival of the Caribbean people to work in mass projects such as railway, it was necessary to draw the line between white people in Costa Rica. There are tons of documents encouraging people to whiten their blood, not to mix with mestizos, blacks or indigenous."* (CR.2, 28:40, own translation)

He then confirmed the relevance of the concept of whiteness and race in present Costa Rica: *"I reassure you that racial division in Costa Rica is very important. Whiteness is a fundamental concept to understand the construction of Costa Rican imagery."* (CR.2, 25:15, own translation). However he explained that whiteness in a form of being based purely on skin colour has transformed into a more modern structure in present time:

> *"<…> it is true that with time and the development of democracy, whiteness is marked not so much as exactly the colour of the skin, but more as a statements of following type: 'white people are more rational, better educated and more democratic'. Therefore, the supposed white supremacy reflects in Costa Ricans making statements like: 'we are more rational, better educated and more democratic than Nicaraguans'. To explain why we are less 'barbaric' and more 'pacific and educated', is because 'we are European', meaning we are white."* (CR.2, 25:15, own translation)

Alexander's explanation goes hand in hand with the point made by Sharman (2011) in theory section on xxx, explaining how afro Caribbean came to be accepted (at least theoretically) into Costa Rican society because 'civilized (e.g. white) people did not discriminate in such barbaric ways' (ibid.) in other words how the concept of whiteness came to include democraticness and how becoming more white in Costa Rica historically is associated with becoming "more urban, more Christian, more civilized, less rural, less black, less indian . . ." (Whitten, 1981).

To demonstrate how the concept of whiteness is relevant not only historically but also nowadays, Alexander shared his observation: *"I follow the comments that people make on the articles and in the press. People express loads of prejudice. And majority of the prejudice are racial."* (CR.2, 27:13, own translation).

Adding to the above ad to the fact that Nicaraguans are the only Central American nation that require visa to enter Costa Rica, Alexander also makes a comment on how racism reflects in current immigration law of Costa Rica:

> *"If you read four latest immigration laws, it is obvious that Costa Rican government is encouraging welcoming of North American and Europeans while creating impassable barriers for poor immigrants who come mainly from neighbouring Central American countries."* (CR.2, 31:31, own translation)

On the Nicaraguan participants' side, stories documenting racism have been shared. Everth, a Nicaraguan student, has told me:

> *"<…> and they [Costa Ricans] have very racist attitudes. For example I have been stopped by police...14-15 times in the last year. That is because I look much darker. Even though nowadays they don't have officially racist policies, you can notice racism and preference to white people in the collective imagery."* (N.3, 29:05, own translation)

Yescárleth, another Nicaraguan interviewee claimed that skin colour is an attribute that defines your position in the Costa Rican society:

> *"According to your skin tone people judge your origins. <…> It defines your status. And in adolescence this could define your place in the group. It's always Nicaraguans and Afro Caribbean who are aside from the 'cool' kids."* (N.5, 26:40, own translation)

To conclude her opinion, she summarised: *"Your skin colour here also defines your education, your economic class. As darker you are, as from a lower class you are perceived."* (N.5, 27:48, own translation). To explain this, Telles (2014) claims that economic and social inequalities are at least as much related to skin color as ethnic identification (*ibid.*). Status hierarchies with roots in colonialism operate worldwide based on the underlying racist logics of 'the more light-skinned, the better' affecting people's opportunities in society and, ultimately, integration processes where immigrants are stratified based on differences in terms of skin color, ethnic culture and/or religion.

When it comes to cultural differences between the two countries, majority's opinions were expressed in favour of the statement that Costa Rica and Nicaragua are more similar than different. Even though, the participants admitted that small differences exist, all have recognized that they are not serious enough to cause a clash. This finding confirms that Costa Rica by not experiencing cultural differences caused by Nicaraguan immigrants' presence is not exposed to the difficulties related to immigrants' integration in terms of cultural clashes which is so often the case in migration situations in Western Europe for

instance. However, despite admitting that most of the cultural and value systems are more similar than different, it has been indicated on various occasions that in no way Costa Ricans want to be associated with Nicaraguans. To illustrate how Costa Ricans disassociate from Nicaraguans, Junior was reassuring me: *"Ask anyone here, no tico wants to be associated with 'nicas'. We are very different."* (CR.1, own translation). Another interviewee, a Nicaraguan Yescárleth, has confirmed this supposition with answering a question what would happen if one would take Costa Rican for Nicaraguan: *"It would be a big insult."* (N.5, 1:03:02, own translation). Alexander has explained this attitude by stating the below:

> *"In most of immigration countries, there are immigrants that are desired and immigrants that are not desired. This has to do with the irrational nature of identity construction, like a mirror in which one allocates ones' aspirations. We want to be compared to Europe or United States, but not with Nicaraguans or other neighbours."* (CR.2, 36:46, own translation)

This statement is another proof of Costa Rican's supposed superiority. Even though they admit Costa Rica and Nicaragua are culturally similar, Costa Ricans don't want to be compared with Nicaraguans. This point can be linked to previously presented finding confirming Costa Rican self-supposed superiority and exceptionalism in the context of Central America.

Linking to the above, since Costa Ricans do not want to be compared with Nicaraguans in any way, judging by the interview findings, Costa Ricans tend to overstate the minor differences that exist between the two nations. This could be explained by their geographical vicinity which creates a need to invent differences in order to expand the virtual distance that exists between the two countries.

> *"According to Freud, when a neighbour is a lot like you, you intend to exaggerate the small differences in order to accentuate how different you are. It's called 'narcissism of the small differences'."* (CR.2, 1:05:13, own translation)

Some have indicated that the fact that Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans are so similar sparks even more austere attitudes towards each other as Costa Ricans do not want to be related to Nicaraguans and thus are constantly trying to disassociate from them in order to highlight the 'little differences' that exists between these two cultures. This way, Costa Ricans it seems try to widen the imaginary gap simultaneously creating impassable boundaries for Nicaraguans to 'become like them'.

Regarding geography, another outcome that became evident while carrying out the interviews was the importance of geographical place that Nicaraguan immigrants occupy in Costa Rica. According to Alexander:

> *"Nicaraguans in Costa Rica haven't always been a problem. Before the 1990s' the numbers were not so overwhelming and they didn't use to migrate to the Central Valley. They used to be on the borders, banana plantations, other agricultural areas, but not in the center of the country (i.e. Central Valley). Nicaraguans moving into Central Valley, made them more visible and more of a problem. Now they are too visible to ignore."* (CR.2, 1:20:36, own translation)

If looking more into where exactly Nicaraguans are allocated within the capital, a Costa Rican participant Junior was stating that it is 'typical' for Nicaraguans to stay in urban slums, such as neighborhood called La Carpio[18] and that it provides a representative image of urban Nicaraguans' presence in Costa Rica:

> *"No, they like living in their own communities. Here we have a place that is called La Carpio. All of the people there are 'nicas'. It's a good representation of Nicaraguans- they bring poverty to Costa Rica. That place is so dangerous and dirty. That's where a lot of criminals come from."* (CR.1, own translation)

Judging from the above quotes as well as collected data in general, it has become evident that Central Valley (i.e. the capital San Jose and neighbouring regions) forms the quintessential cradle of the Costa Rican national imagery and whoever is present in Central Valley while being considered unwanted becomes excluded. Continuing the narrative of the Costa Rican national identity formation, it is indisputable that this national construct includes only the desirable and ideal type of foreigner but also only a desirable and ideal type of Costa Rican, while excluding other national populations such as indigenous populations, Afro Caribbean communities as well as the poor.

To summarise the above points, if we measure issues obstructing immigrants' integration into the receiving societies based on the European standards, Costa Rica should not encounter many. The vast and biggest immigrant group, Nicaraguans, speak Spanish, share the same religious, are in cultural proximity and have similar colonial history. However in reality Nicaraguans receive unambiguous discriminatory treatment from general population of Costa Rica and are prevented from many channels of integration that are available for other groups of foreigners.

While mentioning the comparison between the reception of Nicaraguans and other immigrant groups in Costa Rica, the interview results have numerously revealed the imbalanced perceived or real differences of reception attitudes towards different types of migrants. It soon became evident that, according to the participants, European and American immigrants (often being labeled as 'white') are welcomed without requiring any efforts to achieve the 'deserved' status. As Manuel Antonio, a Nicaraguan construction

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[18] La Carpio is a neighbourhood in San Jose, a capital city of Costa Rica. It is one of the poorest areas in the country inhabited largely by Nicaraguan immigrants (50%) and Costa Ricans.

worker was saying: "*If you come from any culture but Nicaraguan - you're welcome in this country! But for us [Nicaraguans] they slap us and kick us out.*" (N.1.2, 36:53, own translation). Another study participant, Norma, a Nicaraguan domestic worker, said: *"<…> of course it matters [a skin colour of a foreigner]. As whiter- as better for them [Costa Ricans]. They love Americans and they don't want us [Nicaraguans]. You are European? Even better!"* (N.1.1, 33:57, own translation). While according to Yescárleth Nicaraguans have to constantly fight to secure their place and battle with prejudice:

> "*Even though I grew up here I always feel that I don't want to live here. Because I never feel like I'm fully part of this society. I constantly have to fight the prejudice." (*N.5, 29:04, own translation)

This finding also confirms the hypothesis that has been laid out in the premises of this study that in Costa Rica not all migrants are received equally well. In case of Costa Rica it can be witnessed that due to the strong national preference to whiteness and the attributes that whiteness represent, white immigrants easily gain access to the acceptance while Nicaraguans, that have been labeled as 'other', 'unwanted', 'poor' and 'dark skinned' have barely any chance to ever become part of the Costa Rican society.

INTEGRATION & BELONGING

Before analysing the findings on integration related issues, it is important to highlight that Costa Rica is the only country in Central America and one of a very few in the whole of Central America that mentions 'Integration' in its National Immigration Law in the sense of human rights. This has been confirmed by the government representative interviewed for this study:

> "*Costa Rica is the only country that has integration of migrants, in the sense of human rights, in its immigration law in Central America. Maybe even one out of very few in the entire Latin America."* (CR.3, 31:47, own translation)

Alexander, another Costa Rican participant who has worked on the topics related to immigration with the government on various occasions, has insisted that it is important to highlight the efforts that Costa Rica makes in order to be more inclusive, at least politically:

> "*<…> it is important to recognise that government does make an effort to fight discrimination. By laws, jurisprudence, constitution made various mentions of anti-discriminatory policies."* (CR.2, 11:03, own translation)

After reviewing the cases of discrimination, prejudice and exclusionary attitudes towards Nicaraguans in Costa Rica, one can conclude that despite the proximity of the two cultures, same language and religion, common history and traditions and long history of

presence in Costa Rica, generally long term Nicaraguan migrants are not well integrated into Costa Rican society.

To explain the lack of integration of Nicaraguan immigrants into Costa Rican society it is also important to look at the intentions and efforts Nicaraguans make in order to become part of the Costa Rican society. Interview results show that participants have not expressed strong inclinations towards the willingness to make an effort to be part of the Costa Rican society. Many reason such attitudes by stating that Costa Ricans do not have expectations of Nicaraguans to make an effort to integrate. A Costa Rican participant confirms: *"There is no expectation for Nicaraguans to integrate."* (CR.2, 1:36:17, own translation). Others like Maite, an interviewed Nicaraguan said that due to the purposes of their presence in the country (i.e. mostly economic), they don't see integration as necessary: *"I think majority come here to work and they are not so interested in the rest of the things here. They socialise among each other but not much with ticos."* (N.4, 49:09, own translation). Everth, a Nicaraguan student, agreed with Maite:

> *"Nicaraguans here don't get involved in national festivities and in general in things that people do in Costa Rica. I think it's because Nicaraguans in general come here to work. They go to work, home and to a bar. Sometimes to church. Typical festivities really don't interest them; they just don't get the point."* (N.3, 1:19:13, own translation)

Others were describing efforts to integrate as hopeless process. According to Manuel Antonio: "*with time one gets used to Costa Rican lifestyle but one will never become Costa Rican."* (N.1.3, 45:16, own translation). Furthermore, I have sensed a strong pride among Nicaraguans when talking about becoming a 'tico/tica'. I assume, because of the received discrimination, the idea of one day being regarded as Costa Rican for some would be a venality. Nicaraguans are not part of the Costa Rican in-group hence once they are given a chance, they are suspicious or even revengeful to accept it: *"When I tell people I'm from Nicaragua they say, but you've lived here for 12 years; by now you are more tica than Nicaraguan. But I tell them: NO. I am Nicaraguan!"* (N.4, 38:19, own translation). Other participants have explained the segregation and unwillingness to integrate among long term Nicaraguan migrants as a defense mechanism: "*They voluntarily distance themselves from ticos' society. Like a mechanism for self-protection because they are aware of the discrimination."* (N.4, 50:34, own translation). Yescárleth, another Nicaraguan participant who grew up in Costa Rica has shared her story that could be an example of distancing oneself on the individual level:

> *"These kinds of things [discrimination] really have affected my childhood and left some significant traumas for the rest of my life. I became a very quiet child, I wasn't talking to people. I distanced myself to avoid people making fun of me."*(N.5, 02:24, own translation).

Seemingly a fear of being rejected makes 'outsiders' to distance themselves from the rejecting society and this way obstruct the process of integration and social cohesion. In this scenario usually the 'outsiders' create parallel structures so to avoid contact (and negativity that comes with it) with local population. As an example could be densely immigrant populated neighbourhoods (such as in San Jose, like La Carpio), or even a reactionary movements like riots (in Paris, London) or hate crimes (like in Western Europe in general).

When asked about the importance of belonging in a society where one lives, all participants expressed opinions demonstrating its importance. However, some statements like: *"In a way yes [it is important to belong], because you are being watched in this society."* (N.1.2, 48:00, own translation) makes one to question how genuine is the perception of the importance of belonging for some of the participants.

Following on with the Contact Hypothesis outlined in the theory section (section '*Belonging – Integration – (Citizenship) - Social Cohesion*') during the interviews I have inquired about the contact the participants usually have with Nicaraguans/Costa Ricans. When Nicaraguan interviewees were asked whether they have Costa Rican friends, most answered positive. However, most, after asked for more details, explained that named friends are colleagues from work or people who they met in formal circumstances and not so much as personal friends. Vanessa, one of the Nicaraguan housekeepers, said*: "It is easier [to make friends] with Nicaraguans. With ticos you have to think more of what you say…"* (N.1.3, 44:00, own translation). This and several other quotes demonstrate how Nicaraguans are constantly conscious of the likelihood to be prejudiced. Following on this thought, Everth had expressed similar feelings:

> *"<…> But my reaction was pacific because I am always aware I am a Nicaraguan in Costa Rica. I feel under a constant surveillance. So me, as a Nicaraguan, whatever I do, I will always loose against a Costa Rican."* (N.3, 05:55, own translation)

This demonstrates first of all that according to Allport (1954), if the contact is superficial, it does not serve the purpose of reducing the boundaries between the out-group and the in-group. In order for the contact to be effective it needs to be personal. Following this reasoning, it seems that this method of breaking the boundaries hasn't been employed in Costa Rica. It is interesting to note that among Costa Rican participants, no one had admitted they had Nicaraguan friends and the only contact they have with Nicaraguans is with domestic workers or other catering sector employees.

Talking about citizenship as a form of formal belonging, soon it became apparent that in the context of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica citizenship is "*a big word*" (N.3, 56:44, own translation). After talking to the interviewees, I have obtained a more realistic picture of the legal situation of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica. It was confirmed by the participants that the strict immigration and naturalization law towards Nicaraguans work as another exclusionary strategy. Yescárleth said: "*I can't think of anyone that I know of that has a [Costa Rican] citizenship… It is very rare. Most people don't even have a visa, not even talking about ever obtaining a citizenship.*" (N.5, 1:08:27, own translation). About two thirds of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica are believed to be residing without a regular migratory status (Sandoval Garcia, 2010). Not having a regular migratory status exposes immigrants to vulnerabilities and prevents them from accessing any kind of rights while living in Costa Rica. Some spend their entire lives without any rights in Costa Rica. However, it seems that citizenship is next to impossible to obtain for Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. Furthermore, while hypothesizing about owning a Costa Rican passport, the participants agreed that it would be useful only as a practical tool[19], but in no way as a tool for attaining a feeling of belonging. This finding confirms the hypothesis that in Costa Rica national identity is of ethic rather than civic nature (Verkuyten and Martinovic, 2012) which makes the integration of ethnically 'other' groups such as Nicaraguans in Costa Rica next to impossible.

While comparing the prospects of ever belonging in Costa Rica between Nicaraguan and Western immigrants, interview results have presented a unanimous opinion that the process of acceptance, followed by integration and eventually reaching the state of belonging is very different for Western immigrants in comparison to Nicaraguans. Besides the already made points demonstrating Costa Ricans' preference to 'white' immigrants, while asked the same question, Vanesa, a Nicaraguan domestic worker, said: *"Yes, it is easier for you [referring to Europeans] while for us [Nicaraguans], it is more difficult."* (N.1.3, 49:52, own translation). This answer is representative of all participants' opinion. It seems, according to them, that Western immigrants being a 'desired' type do not need to fulfil any prerequisites to be accepted in Costa Rican society. In other words and quite ironically, they do not have to cross any boundary markers in order to be welcomed and accepted into the Costa Rican society. This finding goes in line with the theory analysis

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[19] i.e. Costa Rican passport has more visa free agreements than Nicaraguan passport; for accessing jobs that are only available for Costa Rican nationals etc.

stating that: Costa Rican national mentality has a strong preference to whiteness due to the history of the colonial heritage which follows the idea of white supremacy.

All in all, it seems that the integration process and consequently the attainment of belonging for Nicaraguans in Costa Rica is a lost opportunity at least for now.

Alexander was by far the most optimistic when talking about the future prospects of the inclusion of (marginalised) migrants into Costa Rican society. He emphasized the importance to acknowledge that:

> *"Costa Rica is however one of the most egalitarian countries in Latin America. Here lower social classes at least know that they have rights. It is not the case in most of the other Latin American countries."* (CR.2, 51:32, own translation)

He also added the relatively calm situation in Costa Rica regarding migration:

> *"Here, at least, we don't have discrimination taking a violent action. Like organised groups initiating violence against the immigrants for instance. Here we have more of prejudice than discrimination. And even when it converts to discrimination, it never converts into violent discrimination."* (CR.2, 1:05:21, own translation)

He seemed to think that integration of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica even though very slowly is making a progress:

> *"Despite the discrimination, I think Nicaraguans are slowly integrating. The second, third generation are participating in education, there are more mixed couples, etc. There is a lot of talking and prejudice, but then, in real life, there is some coexistence."* (CR.2, 1:17:50, own translation)

Even though mentioning superficiality of the progress, Yescárleth was also positive when talking about the decrease of racism and prejudice, particularly towards Nicaraguans in Costa Rica:

> *"Before discrimination was very aggressive, I feel, like now it's more passive aggressive. I think now discrimination is not expressed in such open ways because maybe the topic is a little more sensitized. <…> Also I think the knowledge of human rights is more widespread than 10 years ago. Maybe also now teachers take more notice of this, so they [teachers] are not so quick to discriminate Nicaraguan pupils because they know they could get in trouble."* (N.5, 13:49, own translation)

ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE USED

While talking about discrimination towards Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica and evidence that interviewees have provided on this topic, it is also important to analyse the language that has been used during the interviews. None of the Nicaraguan participants were using the derogatory term 'nica', while Costa Rican participants were using it on a regular basis. The language can be an important tool for discrimination. In the context of Costa Rica, as it has been already established, while there is no presence of violent discrimination, verbal abuse is rampant. As Manuel Antonio indicated:

> *"<…> But with Nicaraguans- speaking vulgarly- they treat us like filth. And I don't know why because we are all human being. They call us 'paisa[20]. They call us 'paisa' and they don't understand that we are also humans and it hurts us. They also call us 'nicas'. It really offends me."* (N.1.2, 13:07, own translation).

As well as this example, it has been shown on various occasions during the interviews that Costa Rica is particularly prone to exercise verbal abuse and that Costa Rican society tends to use mocking and insensitive jokes as a form of discrimination while hiding behind excuses, like 'it's only a joke'. Yescárleth has confirmed such observation: *"<…> Costa Rica is a culture of mocking. They don't like confrontation or arguing. So their jokes about Nicaraguan accent are a hidden discrimination."* (N.5, 19:29, own translation). Yescárleth also shared a story that is a brutal example of how mocking can be a hidden verbal abuse:

> *"A Nicaraguan man was breaking into someone's property and there was a big dog, Rottweiler. A dog had bitten a thief to death while people were standing and looking but no one helped him. As an aftermath, there were many anecdotes and funny stories with messages similar to: 'thanks to Rottweiler Costa Ricans are saved from 'Nicas''; 'A Rottweiler saves Costa Ricans', 'Rottweiler- a national hero of Costa Rica', etc. This story is very sad to me."* (N.5, 11:22, own translation).

She then summarized her stand on the issue by highlighting how many are not aware that jokes made about Nicaraguans are discrimination: *"I know now that all these jokes are discrimination, but many people don't know it. And they don't know much about human rights and that is not right to discriminate."* (N.5, 48:54, own translation).

As *'we'/'them'* dichotomy has been touched upon in the theory chapters, it is interesting to review what primary data has shown. It was to no big surprise noticeable that once Costa Ricans were gently confronted with the questions on discriminatory attitudes towards Nicaraguan migrants, the language would turn to *'they'*, disassociating themselves (while actually being part of '*them*') from 'the ones who discriminate'. No less was expected that Nicaraguans will use *'they'* when talking about Costa Ricans and *'us'* while talking about Nicaraguans. However more curious observation was the use of *'we'/'them'* language by the Nicaraguan participants who have relatively strong links with Costa Rica. Like Yescárleth who is Nicaraguan but who has been living in Costa Rica her entire life, or Sandra who has obtained education in Costa Rica and who seemed to be very well integrated were using '*we'/'them'* interchangeably depending on the topic and their position on the topic.

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[20] Short term for "paisano" which translates to countryman. An inhabitant of a rural or remote area who is usually characterized by an utter lack of sophistication and cultivation. Usually people from rural areas take this term as derogatory. To them it is like calling them "indigenous", "ignorant" and/or "flamboyant". By Republica Mexicana/Estados Unidos Mexicanos/Mexico August 06, 2004

Another assumption that can be made is that Nicaraguans who went through the education process (and therefore socialization process) in Costa Rica (such as Yescárleth and Sandra) feel much more integrated and accepted in the community; them using *'we'* while talking about Costa Ricans could be interpreted as a proof of belongingness.

If conclusion was to be made on how the bias have been varying between Nicaraguans' and Costa Ricans' testimonies, it can be claimed that differences have not been significantly noticeable as both in large have admitted the discrimination against Nicaraguans (including interviewed Costa Ricans) and both have admitted Costa Rican supposed superiority (including Costa Rican participants). This can be interpreted as a demonstration that the opinions on the themes that have been investigated such as Costa Ricans' feeling of superiority or Nicaraguan immigrants' marginalisation in Costa Rica have common consent both in the Costa Rican society and among Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica.

CONCLUSIONS

While analyzing the findings that had derived from the interview results it has become evident that Costa Rican national identity as a construct is exclusionary towards the groups that are considered 'undesirable'. Specifically, in the immigration context in Costa Rica, Nicaraguans are evidently the group that plays this role. Furthermore it can be concluded that Nicaraguans are not only excluded from playing an equal part with other migrants and Costa Ricans, but are also assigned a label of the 'other'. The 'other', it has been confirmed, is necessary for Costa Ricans in order to highlight their superiority and to self-assign a self-proclaimed title of being *exceptional* in the region.

It has been identified that throughout the history Nicaraguan community, owning to the political conflicts and antipodal pace of the economic development, has been dispensed a strongly negative prejudice that lump the whole of Nicaraguan community under one label and make it extremely difficult to break the stereotypes.

It has not been difficult to observe that the treatment that other types of foreigners receive in Costa Rica such as the ones from the Western countries comes in sharp contract with the treatment Nicaraguans get. Throughout the history and until now European and American foreigners have been considered as 'desirable' addition to the Costa Rican society, while Nicaraguans and partially other Central Americans have been suffering discrimination. This is linked to Costa Rica's constant striving to rise up to the assumed progressiveness of the Western countries. It is equally important to mention that judging

from the interview findings and reviewed theory, historically whiteness in Costa Rica represents wealth, modernity and success, while indigenous features (as well as African) are associated with lower social class and backwardness. In other words, in Costa Rica, according to interview results, your skin colour defines your social status. In this scenario, according to Costa Rican national imagery construct, Nicaraguans are pegged with the trademark of being 'indigenous' or 'darker', even though the truthfulness of such claims is highly contentious.

All the 'Nicaraguan' traits that are picked on by Costa Rican society and used as justification for discriminatory attitudes can be clustered into typical xenophobic rhetoric and therefore easily compared to the anti-immigration rhetoric so common in the European context. The surprising attribute that resulted from the interviews though was the prejudice caused by Nicaraguan Spanish accent even though Nicaraguan and Costa Rican Spanish, besides small pronunciation differences and varying words, is exactly the same language. After analyzing the interview findings it was evident that it causes so much prejudice that many interviewees consider Nicaraguan accent as something 'that appalls Costa Ricans the most about Nicaraguans'. At this point it has been extremely useful to bring in the topic of Costa Rican national identity as a construct that explains why integration is harder for some out-group members. It is up to *'them'* to decide who can be included into the definition of '*us*' and who is not, even if it does not have a logic behind it. I believe it has been completely appropriate and valuable to use Costa Rican national identity as one of the explanations for unravelling the reasons for discrimination towards Nicaraguans in Costa Rican context.

While this study has been focused on long term Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica, it was aimed to measure the level of integration of foreign interviewees as well as to get the idea of the general integration levels of the whole of the Nicaraguan community in Costa Rica. In doing so, the boundaries necessary to vault in order to belong as perceived by the interviewees were divided into: formal and majority attitudes. It was hypothesized that formal boundary markers are of less significance in Costa Rican migratory context than those of majority attitudes. One interpretation of what came out as significant and insignificant variables after analysing the interview findings and the theory, is that in the Costa Rican context the formal mode of boundary drawing matters less for immigrants' perceptions of inclusion than the discourses which they meet in everyday interactions with members of the majority population. Developing this interpretation further, one may speculate that formal boundaries such as citizenship, does not determine the feeling of

belonging due to the fact that immigrants engage less frequently and less directly with these formal boundaries, as compared to the majority's determined boundaries which would seem to influence any encounter with the majority community. In fact citizenship throughout the data collection process has been quoted as something merely practical and not having any significant effect on the social belonging. Hence while the causal path from the host nation's identity to immigrants' belonging is in empirical reality quite complex, these results suggest that belonging is more a matter of informal and subtle boundary drawing performed in everyday interactions between immigrants and majority members rather than being a matter of elite-formulated definitions of *'us'* and *'them'*. It is however equally important to point out that often those majority attitudes that determine boundary drawing are formulated by using elite's suggested definitions, i.e. transmitted though popular media, press and political discourses therefore decreasing the gap between the elite's definitions and majority's perceptions. In other words often majority's perceptions are heavily influenced by the elite's programmed ideas.

In preparation to developing a system of how to measure the level of belongingness among Nicaraguan informants, the six boundary markers were defined: national ancestry, being of the national religion, length of residence in country, birthplace, language skills and having host´s national citizenship. Consequently these boundary markers have been divided into attainable boundary markers: language skills and having host national citizenship; and ascriptive boundary markers: ancestry, religion, birthplace, and the length of residence in a host country. Since these boundary markers derive from general literature on national identity, some of them, such as language and religion have been irrelevant for this study, since both countries share the same language and religion. Nevertheless, as it was obvious from collected data, a common language as a uniting feature among Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans in Costa Rica means very little. Quite on the contrary it in no way gives Nicaraguans an advantage of an easier access to inclusion and belongingness. Nicaraguan Spanish receives even more prejudice than non-Spanish speaking foreigners trying to learn Spanish. That is an example of how small differences can be exaggerated in order to fit Nicaraguans into the image of 'other'. The length of residence didn't seem to make a big difference either as direct correlation between a longer length residence and stronger belongingness hasn't been noticed. This also makes a differentiation with studies on some European countries which demonstrate the codependence between length of residence and belonging. There is however a certain increase in chance of feeling part of Costa Rica more if one has migrated in his/her early

years. This way, according to Anthony D. Smith (1991), a migrant goes through socialization process that is implemented through the educational system which often results into higher likelihood of being and feeling integrated. As one of the Nicaraguan participants was saying: "*I think it [integration process] was easier for me and my brothers than for my parents and it will be easier for my children than it was for me.*" (N.5, 40:16, own translation). Hence, it is quite significant to point out that many important determinants for belonging that would be of highest importance in European countries turned out to be of no or merely any significance in the context of Costa Rica.

As Allport's Contact Hypothesis has been tested throughout the interviews too, the results have shown that most of the interviewed participants do not have close contact with the other group's members (i.e. Nicaraguans with Costa Ricans and Costa Ricans with Nicaraguans) which according to Allport, means that Contact Hypothesis, as a tool to increase the acceptance and ease the integration, within the study sample could not be effectively tested.

Overall, the findings of this study support the proposition that national identity boundary drawing has significant effects on the ease (or constraint) with which newcomers come to feel included in their new community. Furthermore, the findings indicate that it is far from irrelevant which national community the individual immigrant arrives to and where he/she arrives from, since receiving communities appear to differ with respect to how welcoming they are of immigrants often depending on a migrant's origin and how much room there is for newcomers in the host nation's self-understanding. In the Costa Rican context, when talking about easy/difficult integration, it seems it varies greatly whether we are talking about Nicaraguans (and in a way other Central Americans) or Western immigrants.

In Costa Rica the demands of diversity cannot be ignored. With a 10% of its population being foreign born, diversity is a fact of life and integration is a necessary attribute to achieve social cohesion. However it is hard to talk about the possibility of social cohesion in Costa Rica before the biggest immigrant group, the Nicaraguans become considered as equals.

Besides the Nicaraguans, new and possibly more challenging flows of migration are taking place in Costa Rica such as extra continental migrants from Asia and Africa which might add onto the challenges that Costa Rica is facing with the current migrants.

This informs the debate concerning the causal significance of national identity and inclusion/exclusion. In particular, this study suggests that it is 'national membership in a more informal sense' which is important, and that it 'is not administered by specialised

personnel [or policy-makers] but by ordinary people in the course of everyday life, using tacit understandings of who belongs and who does not' (Brubaker, 2010).

My findings not only support the idea that national identity and its effects are largely mediated through reasoning, perceptions and discourse, but they also indicate a degree of discursive path dependency of national boundaries.

Efforts should be made to increase social awareness of the marginal position Nicaraguans are assigned with and the hardships they face in Costa Rica. Increased awareness could further a dialogue that may ultimately lead to improved social relations between the two nationalities but especially help to improve conditions of Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica. While I consider this study to have given sound and ground indications of the continued relevance of national identity while studying topics related to migration, it is limited in relying only on correlational data and theoretical analyses. Future studies should try to specify in greater detail the mechanism leading from (perceptions of) boundaries to feelings of belonging. This would require data of a more nuanced and quantitative kind, for example, to expand the sample for detailed interviews in order to include more participants as well as to incorporate surveys that could collect the data from a much wider range of population. Additionally, it would be of great importance and increased value to the study if data could be collected not only from Nicaraguans but also from other immigrant groups, for instance Westerners, other Central and South Americans as well as internal groups liable for exclusion such as Afro Caribbean and indigenous populations as well as a possibility of this study to be replicated in other countries of Central and South America. Furthermore assessment of the suggested path dependency is a topic of utmost relevance for future research, since for a full evaluation of the argument advocated in this thesis, it would be interesting to know how persistent boundaries are and how much they change over time.

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