



University of Stavanger, Norway

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMMIGRANTS' LANGUAGE USE AND THE
CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SELF AND OTHER**

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ABSTRACT

In Norway, hegemonic discourses on African immigrants reflect global dominant discourses on migrants, with negative constructions and projections of African migrants as poor, inferior and uneducated. These discriminatory and racialized conceptualizations, which negatively impact the conceptualization of self are exacerbated by the media and incite right-wing populist ideology. Though the Norwegian government has a holistic immigration and integration policy, these hegemonic conceptualizations may trump policy in-day-to-day practice. In investigating the phenomenon under study, the research used phenomenology and social constructionism as philosophical positions to explore and understand the lived experiences of participants in the project. Qualitative research was the method of inquiry and in-depth semi-structured interviews were used for data collection while thematic analysis with an inductive approach and critical discourse analysis CDA were methods used to analyze the data. The data were collected from seven participants of African descent. The major findings of the research were that participants disarticulated themselves from dominant discourses on immigrants using resistance and positive reframing as agency to counter hegemonic constructions, perceptions, and categorization of African immigrants. Appropriate policy and practice recommendations, and recommendations for further research are made based on the conclusions drawn from the study.

Table of content

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	2
ABSTRACT.....	3
CHAPTER ONE.....	6
1.1 Introduction.....	6
1.2 Background of the study.....	6
1.3 Problem statement.....	7
1.4 Research questions.....	8
1.5 Purpose of the study.....	8
1.6 Outline of the study.....	9
CHAPTER TWO.....	10
2.1 Literature review.....	10
2.2 Who are immigrants.....	10
2.3 What is transnationalism.....	11
2.4 Language use in context.....	12
2.5 European and Norwegian media discourses on African immigrants.....	13
2.6 Norwegian immigration and integration policy.....	14
2.7 Experiences of immigrants in Norway.....	15
CHAPTER THREE.....	18
3.1 Research methodology and theoretical framework.....	18
3.2 Philosophical position: Phenomenology and social constructionism.....	18
3.3 Research methodology and design.....	19
3.4 sampling and recruitment.....	21
3.5 Data collection.....	21
3.6 Data analysis.....	22
3.7 Ethical consideration.....	24
3.8 Limitation of the study.....	25
3.9 Trustworthiness of the research.....	25
3.10 Theoretical framework.....	26
CHAPTER FOUR.....	29
4.1 Introduction.....	29
4,2 Scio-demographic information of participants.....	30
4.3 Transnationalism and cultural identity.....	31

4.4 Identity crisis.....	32
4.5 Creating a new identity.....	33
4.6 Discrimination.....	34
4.7 Language barrier.....	35
4.8 Discrimination and marginalization.....	36
4.9 Media messages.....	36
4.10 Implications for the next generation.....	38
4.11 Resistance.....	39
4.12 Factors that hinder and foster integration in Norwegian context.....	40
4.13 Language barrier.....	41
4.14 School.....	42
4.15 Social networks.....	43
4.16 Critical reflection.....	45
CHAPTER FIVE.....	46
5.1 Conclusion.....	46
5.2 Summary of the research findings.....	46
5.3 Recommendations.....	47
5.4 Reconstructing dominant discourses.....	47
5.5 Intercultural studies.....	48
5.6 Reduce language fees.....	48
5.7 Recommendation for future studies.....	49
References.....	50
Appendix 1 (Consent form).....	61
Appendix 2 (Interview guide).....	64
Appendix 3 (NSD approval).....	66

Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

The central premise of this study is that language is not neutral, it not only reflects the world but actively constructs our worldview and the world we live in. It also speaks of the complex relationship between structure and agency. Language is imbricated in complex power dynamics and can construct an individual's identity (Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., 2012; McGowan, 2006; Scholl et al., 2015; Sewpaul, 2013). Although a means of communication, it is also a tool used in expressing a person's self-conception (Karakayali, 2021).

Self-conceptualization, a concept that will be used through-out the study, refers to thoughts, feelings and appraisal people have about themselves and others' conceptualization of them (Karakayali, 2021). However, self conceptualization can be influenced by class, gender, education, race, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, country of origin and settlement, the media, and opinion of others. This concept is salient in explaining the human behavior (Burns, 1980).

1.2 Background of the study

Migration is a paradox of complexity, and reasons people migrate are diverse and frequently changing (V. Esses et al., 2017; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Tataru, 2020). The world we live in is constantly evolving hence immigrants have significant impact on the economic, political, sociocultural, legal, and educational, rubric of sovereign states, intergovernmental agencies and civil societies (Tataru, 2020). Nevertheless, immigrants' integration has been a hot topic for global institutions like the United Nations (UN), European union (EU), International Organization of Migration (IOM), and the Organization of Economic and Cooperation Development (OECD) (Ims et al., 2021).

African immigrants have always migrated for both economic and non-economic reasons, and moving to a new country comes with its own challenges and complexities (Achieng & El Fadil, 2020; V. Esses et al., 2017; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). Immigrants of African descent have been subjected to discourses impacting them negatively with sensational media coverage that has incited distrust, discrimination, exclusion, racism and marginalization in the labor market (Achieng & El Fadil, 2020; de Haas, 2008; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016).

In Norway, discourses on skin color discrimination are muted, yet immigrants face marginalization in the labor market because of their names and immigrant background. At the

same time, integrating into the Norwegian system comes with its own challenges as immigrants are faced with learning a new language, learning the Norwegian culture, trying to prove they are not who dominant discourses make them to be and still operate within multiple sociocultural spaces with multiple roles and identity constructions (Crawley & Jones, 2021; Dijk, 2008; Sewpaul, 2013, 2021). Mainstream media propagate dominant discourses on immigrants that are shaped by fear, prejudice, bias and Eurocentrism (Førland, 2017).

This study used qualitative research approach to explore and investigate how African immigrants in Norway navigate these dominant social constructions and its impact on the construction and conceptualization of self and others, and how these, impact on integration of migrants into the Norwegian society. The research used phenomenology to understand the lived experiences of participants while using critical theory as the theoretical framework. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection while thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis were used to analysis the data.

1.3 Problem statement

In modern society there is skepticism towards race, yet social realities show that race or racialized identities have impact on employment, housing, career prospect, politics, society and the economy (Sewpaul, 2013). Thus, the inequality, discrimination and marginalization experienced by African immigrants living in Norway comes under scrutiny in this study. The immigration and integration policy (Inclusion, 2022, 2023) leans towards integration, with government making provisions for immigrants in the society yet every day practice trumps policy. Still the media reinforces dominant discourses that incite fear, distrust, inequality, and social exclusion on immigrant populations in Norway. The influence of these dominant constructions and ideologies in African immigrant's use of language in conceptualization of self and others constitute the scope of this study. According to Sewpaul (2013) "the ideologies that we hold are reflected in and reinforced by cultural norms, practices, religion, politics and the media, thus our thinking in turn shapes social policies and social structures, reflecting a circular and dialectic relationship between structure and agency" (p.119). While there are literatures regarding media messages about immigrants (V. M. Esses et al., 2013; Figenschou & Beyer, 2014; Førland, 2017), migrants experiences of discrimination (Agyare, 2021; Midtbøen, 2016) and children of migrants and minority backgrounds being over represented in the child protection system (Skivenes, 2015). There is no research on this particular topic in the Norwegian context.

1.4 Research questions

The principal objective of this study, is to find out the relationship between immigrants' language use and the conceptualization of self and others in the Norwegian society. The following are specific research questions guiding the study:

- How does the language used by immigrants of African descent reflect their conceptualization of self and others?
- What is the relationship between immigrants' self-conceptualization and dominant discourses on immigrants in the Norwegian context?
- How does dominant national constructions and immigrants' conceptualization of self hinder or foster integration into Norwegian society?

1.5 Purpose of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate African immigrants' language use in context in relation to constructions of self and others, and how these constructions influence their experiences of inequality, transnationalism, identity construction, othering and integration vis-à-vis the labor market, education (school) and the Norwegian language (norsk).

The study's goal was to gain insight and understanding on the perceptions and experiences of African immigrants' living in Norway and how they navigate through social institutions and practices and interact with social actors.

Studies on immigrants in general and African immigrants in particular living in Norway show they experience discrimination, social exclusion and negative constructions (Cederberg, 2014; Crawley & Jones, 2021; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Fjørland, 2017). In view of Freire's, (2018) assertion that oppressed groups tend to internalize oppressive structures and discourses, thus see themselves as inferior, this study sought to understand the impacts of dominant social discourses and practices on self-conceptualization of African immigrants and their conceptions of others in the Norwegian context. Sewpaul (2013) writes of how dominant social discourses become inscribed into us, so much so that we become complicit in reproducing various forms of oppression, marginalization and exclusion. However, it is not only the internalization of oppression that is important in anti-oppressive and anti-racist social work practice and social justice endeavors. An examination and understanding of internalized privilege is equally important in emancipatory social work (Pease, 2021; Sewpaul, 2013). This study makes a contribution to anti-oppressive and anti-racist social work, multiculturalism and diversity,

education and practice. The findings of the study will benefit policy makers and government agencies tasked with integration implementation in uncovering societal discourses and socio-political and cultural structures and practices that are obstacles to integration.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one provides a background for the study, reasons the study is needed and the research questions that guided the study. Chapter two provides an extensive and comprehensive literature review, while chapter three is focused on the methodology used in the study and the theoretical framework employed in the research. Chapter four is centered on the data findings and the discussions supported with scholarly text and theory. Chapter five is the conclusion and recommendation of the study.

Chapter 2

2.1 Literature review

The literature review focuses on the key conceptualizations that are used through-out the research, these are ‘immigrants/migrants’, ‘transnationalism/ transnational identity’, language use in context’, ‘European and Norwegian media discourses on African immigrants’, ‘Norwegian immigration and integration policy’ and ‘experiences of immigrants in Norway’. In order to seek scholarly texts used for the literature review, I used University of Stavanger library and oria.no a digital university library as well as academic database search engines.

2.2 Who are immigrants/ migrants?

This section begins with a scholarly review of who immigrants are. However, to do so, one must back track to know what immigration is, since in view of immigration we have immigrants/migrants.

According to scholars immigration is the voluntary or involuntary movement of people to a new country in which they intend to settle either for an extended period of time or permanently (Achieng & El Fadil, 2020; V. Esses et al., 2017; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Tataru, 2020).

African immigrants, being the focus of this research, according to reviewed literature migrate for a myriad of reasons ranging from economic reasons which would include unemployment, underemployment or low income, and also trade and/or business (Achieng & El Fadil, 2020; V. Esses et al., 2017; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Tataru, 2020). While noneconomic reasons would include political instability in the country of origin, war, political and religious persecution, lack of educational opportunities, increased or high crime rates and environmental factors such as natural disasters like flooding and drought(Achieng & El Fadil, 2020; V. Esses et al., 2017; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Tataru, 2020).

Immigration and immigrants, as Achieng & El Fadil (2020), Esses et al (2017) and Tataru (2020) reveals, are as old as humankind. People will continue to move from one country and/or continent to the other in search of better opportunities or for safety reasons. African immigrants have always migrated for trade, better opportunities or more personal reason (Achieng & El Fadil, 2020). This supports contemporary literature that more micro-evidences shows Africans migrate for work, family or study (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). Contrary to the common idea that most African migrants travel without proper documents, which has formed the perception of most African immigrants as undocumented, evidence show that most African immigrants

travel out of the African continent with valid passports, visas and other travel documents (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016).

2.3 What is transnationalism?

According to scholars, the concept of transnationalism could be defined as the process where migrants build social fields linking their country of origin and residence, grow old and retain diverse relations (for example familial, economic, religious) that span borders (Tedeschi et al., 2022). In transnationalism, migrants act, decide, have concerns and develop identities within social networks that connects them to two or more societies simultaneously, making this process continuously evolve and greatly contribute to the forging of dual or multiple identities and sense of belonging (Tedeschi et al., 2022). In this concept migrants' adaptation processes in the country of residence is a persistent negotiation between individuals or groups where membership is dynamically agreed, differences accepted or rejected and hybrid identities continuously redefined (Tedeschi et al., 2022). There's the awareness of de-centered connections of being concurrently home away from home, here and there or for instance being Canadian and something else (Vertovec, 2009). However this awareness of multi-locality quickens the desire to associate oneself with others, both here and there who share the same routes and roots (Vertovec, 2009).

In a broader sense transnationalism provides an umbrella concept for transformative processes and development since it alters people's sense of belonging to places, affect citizenship and nationality, modifies their aspirations, interests, and decisions in everyday life and also influences their identity (Tedeschi et al., 2022; Vertovec, 2009)

Since the scope of this study involves African migrants in Norway, it is important to understand what informs their transnational identity.

Transnational identity applies to people who have a cross-cultural living experiences between their country of origin and country of residence (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015). In their argument De fina & Perrino (2013), Tsakiri (2005) and Sewpaul (2013) posit that identities are not fixed, rather they are fluid, dynamic and changing and a result of various processes and social practices. Migrants bring with them their own identities as shaped by culture, religion, education, gender, class, race, ideology and politics (De Fina & Perrino, 2013; Tsakiri, 2005). However migration brings with it processes of assimilation and/or integration that produce a reconstruction of these identities, it also produces confusion and a resistance as migrants hold

unto their identities and cultural constructions of their countries of origin (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015).

International mobility has increased the linguistics, cultural and identity diversity of immigrants which has led to values and cultural repertoires being placed within the same context. Subsequently migrants new experiences filter the lenses through which they see the world and hence they must negotiate between different spaces and forms of cultural socialization (Burholt et al., 2016; Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015; Tsakiri, 2005). Thus migrants' transnational identities aid them to participate in multiple social and cultural contexts which is a necessary tool for development and growth in a culturally diverse society (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015). Yet this identity poses a challenge in the process of assimilation and/or integration which might produce resistance.

2.4 Language use in context

Immigrants operate in multiple spaces, including multiple social and cultural contexts, which leads to the next logical sequence in this review which is language use in context.

Language is imbricated in complex power dynamics, it is used in social interaction, social processes, identity construction and it is context based (H. H. Clark, 1992; Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006; Fairclough et al., 1997; Gregory & Carroll, 2018; Tyson, 2023). The use of language is never neutral, it both reflects and reproduce the world that we live in (Sewpaul, 2021).

According to Eaglestone & Holloway (2006) language is cultural construct- a set of conventions that influences or even determines the sorts of ideas and experiences people have or are able to have. They claim language use is always in context (H. H. Clark, 1992; Dijk, 2008; Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006; Gregory & Carroll, 2018). Hence language is not transparent (Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006) rather it gives the fundamental structure for the world around us by organizing it to become conceptually real and meaningful, so that we, as an effect of that language can describe discuss, interpret and act upon the world around us (Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006; McGowan, 2006; Tyson, 2023; Wake & Malpas, 2013).

Additionally in the study of language and discourse, context is seen in the light of independent social variables for instance gender, class, ethnicity, age, identity or in regards to social conditions of text and talk, yet it is essential to realize how discourse reproduce social structures

and how context influences discourse processes (H. H. Clark, 1992; Dijk, 2008; Gregory & Carroll, 2018).

Lastly, in his argument Dijk (2008) stated that context is an intersubjective construct designed and ongoingly updated by interactions among participants. Therefore, context is the link between discourse and society, between personal and social as well as the link between agency (individual autonomy and the freedom to think and act) and structure (the dominant societal discourses and practices). Sewpaul (2021) discusses the complexity in the relationship between agency and structure, concluding that “the systems, structures, laws, and policies ‘out there’ that we often criticize are representations of the collectivities of consciousness of all of us, particularly those who occupy powerful positions. If the structures of the human mind, our consciousness remains the same, we will repeatedly recreate the same social world that we have normalized”(p.260). In other words the social world becomes inscribed into individuals, groups, communities who in turn influence and shape the social world around them, influencing a complex circular relationship between the individual and the society (Sewpaul, 2013).

2.5 European and Norwegian media discourses on African immigrants

The Global North, particularly in the last two decades of the 21st century has constructed immigrants as a swarm invading the southern borders of the global north at unprecedented level (Crawley & Jones, 2021; Dingott Alkopher, 2018; Rother, 2018). “This gives rise to the image of an exodus of desperate Africans fleeing poverty at home in search of the European El Dorado” (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016, p. 1).

Global discourses on immigrants represents them as a security risk, a threat to the welfare state, as reducing the resources of the welfare state as well as mounting pressure on social welfare (Cederberg, 2014; de Haas, 2008). Furthermore immigrants are described as uneducated, poor, and have conflicting culture and cultural practices (Cederberg, 2014). At the same time a contrasting opinion is equally used to project immigrants as victims of smugglers and human traffickers who were forcefully emigrated (de Haas, 2008). These contrasting descriptions, create confusion, distrust, suspicion as well as pity, and the society in context will be at a loss as to how to place immigrants because of these contracts and contradictory views. Both views construct immigrants as victims and as persons with little or no agency.

Foreign media has exacerbated the perceptions of immigrants via its negative media coverage and sensational headlines, thus reinforcing dominant discourses and re-affirming stereotypes (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Førland, 2017; Guia, 2016). Immigrants of African descent have

some of the most negative media coverage, because Africa is (re)presented as a miserable continent plagued with hunger, war, corruption and bad governance (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). Such constructions of Africa and African migrants do have implications regarding access to opportunities and resources. For example the rates of unemployment are higher among immigrants than among Norwegians, with the lowest rates of employment (7%) being among immigrants from Africa (Statistics Norway, 2021). This supports the arguments above regarding language, agency and structures. Ideological constructs do not exist as theoretical abstractions, they affect the material conditions of people and impact the self-conceptualization of people in profound ways (Sewpaul, 2013, 2021).

Hall (1985) cogently writes of the power of ideological hegemony and the possibilities that it holds for resistance, when he argues that “ideological struggle actually consists of attempting to win some new set of meanings for an existing term or category or disarticulating it from its place in a signifying structure. For example it is precisely because ‘black’ is the term which connotes the most despised, the de-possessed, unenlightened, uncivilized, the uncultured, the scheming, the incompetent that it can be contested, transformed and invested with a positive ideological value” (p.112)

In the Norwegian context, the official stance on immigration leans towards integration (Barne-, 2012; Inclusion, 2022; Regjeringen.no, 2007) but the dominant Norwegian media representation of immigrants, particularly of African immigrants is no different from global discourses (Førland, 2017). While Norway supports a holistic immigration policy, dominant discourses incite right-wing populism (Førland, 2017; Guia, 2016) which might trump policy in day-to-day practices (Agyare, 2021).

2.6 Norwegian immigration and integration policy

This section starts with an overview of certain aspects of the immigration and integration policy that is relevant to the scope of this research.

In Norway, the document regulating of the rights of foreign citizens to entry, residence and work is the Immigration Act of 15 May that became effective 1st January 2010(Inclusion, 2023). According to the Act, there are 4 entry categories into the country namely: family, labor, protection and education/training/exchange (Inclusion, 2023).

The aim of the immigration and integration policy is to provide opportunities for refugees and other immigrants to participate in the Norwegian labor market and community life as well as

to foster strong local communities and well-functioning community arenas, promote equality and also combat negative social control (Inclusion, 2023).

The Norwegian immigration and integration policy is geared towards diversity, equality, and social inclusion, which is aimed at providing equal opportunity for everyone resident in Norway. This policy has a holistic approach when looking through the lens of the Nordic welfare system which is hinged on universalism and equal rights (Hilson, 2020; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2002, 2007).

However, integration is not a one day's job, rather it takes effort and time, thus immigrants are encouraged to contribute to and participate in society (Inclusion, 2023) at the same time government must take steps to ensure the possibilities for individual immigrants to study and participate in the labor force, be included in the local communities, sports and culture, while public services must provide equal opportunities for all (Inclusion, 2023).

As part of its efforts to strengthen integration of immigrants into the society, the Norwegian government initiated the Introduction Act which was implemented in 2003, the Act has metamorphosed into the Integration Act. The target group of this Act amongst immigrants are the refugees and their families and persons granted residence on humanitarian grounds and their families (Inclusion, 2023). The Norwegian language and social studies are taught to the target group for free and job opportunities are also created for immediate integration after the program.

However voluntary migrants may not benefit from the Integration Act because their entry status into Norway isn't refugee, hence this excludes voluntary migrants from the opportunity to learn the Norwegian language and the culture of the society which is taught in social studies. This exclusion is contrary to the aims and objectives of the immigration and integration policy as well as the aims of the Integration Act.

2.7 Experiences of immigrants in Norway

Moving to a new country comes with its inherent challenges as migrants are faced with homesickness, loneliness, climate change, new lifestyles, lifestyle changes, transnational activities, and multicultural spaces. The pain associated with this can be deep and enduring. Although fictionalized Shafak (2021) poignantly describes this “the places where we were born are the shape of our lives, even when we are away from them. Especially then” (p.33) and “that is what migration and relocations do to us: when you leave your home for unknown shores,

you don't simply carry on as before; a part of you dies inside so that another part can start all over again" (p.55). Yet the migration process and experiences also brings new opportunities, hope and aspirations, and the formation of new relational bonds (Blomster Lyshol et al., 2022). Migrants try to (re)establish themselves in their new environment through building a social life, network and support via social institutions while continuously negotiating and reconstructing their identities and relations to 'others'(Blomster Lyshol et al., 2022).

Studies have shown that non-western immigrants have a higher risk of unemployment and earn less than non-immigrants. Research findings show institutionalized negligence and differential treatment based on the negative perceptions of non-Europeans in Norway (McIntosh, 2015; Stören, 2004). The Oslo terror attack of 2011(Figenschou & Beyer, 2014) and Ali's story of August 2007(McIntosh, 2015) have revealed contradictions that produce racialized identities in Norway and the different types of racism such as institutionalized and everyday experiences, endured by those visibly marked as others(McIntosh, 2015).

Still racial concepts are difficult to recognize in places where strong taboos against discussion of race exist (McIntosh, 2015). Those who bear the visible stigmata of difference are thrown into the middle of racialized discourses of immigrant integration. In Norway this dynamics is exacerbated by historical preoccupation of national identity, sovereignty and folk behavior. (McIntosh, 2015). Flem et al (2023, p. 8) based on research with social work students in the Norwegian context, concluded that it was the visible markers of difference in respect of skin color and race, that played more profound roles in discrimination, exclusion, and oppression, rather than nationality per se", highlighting that it was easier to be an immigrant of European descent than an immigrant of for example Afghanistan or African descent.

Demographic surveys shows that immigrants of African descent and Norwegians of African descent, constitute multicultural, multilingual and multigenerational populations of long term, permanent residents, naturalized citizens and professional workers who migrated for employment or tertiary education, political exiles and recent refugees, are confronted with similar challenges in realizing integration and equal participation (McIntosh, 2015). Labor market involvement of Norwegians born to migrant parents trailed behind that of the majority, with immigrants of African descent facing the lowest levels of employment (McIntosh, 2015; Statistics Norway, 2021).

According to The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) the unwillingness to hire apprentices with an immigrant background may explain why second

generation immigrants in Norway face barriers as they enter the labor market (McIntosh, 2015). Immigrants also experience statistical discrimination, a situation that occurs when an individual is judged based on the average characteristics of the group(s) they belongs to rather than their personal characteristics, and employers also consider the cost of obtaining the necessary information about immigrants' qualification (Stören, 2004).

The formal disinclination to acknowledge the hinderance posed by skin color discrimination and, race-thinking allows contemporary forms of racism to be reproduced (McIntosh, 2015). Immigrants in Norway argue that state immigration mostly focuses on the most marginalized of African migrants, leading to the assumption that all migrants of African descent fall into this targeted category for policy reform thus concealing ongoing discrimination (McIntosh, 2015).

Previous research has focused on African immigrants' perceptions and experiences of inequality, discrimination and marginalization in the Norwegian context vis-à-vis the employment, social institutions and actors. However, there is knowledge gap on African immigrants' self conceptualization and conceptualization of others in relation to dominant discourses, which this study will explore via the research methodology and theoretical frame work that are elucidated in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

3.1 Research methodology and theoretical framework

Methodology is a practical framework where data are positioned so their meanings may be visible when planning and executing a research (Bryman, 2016).

The methodological approach of the study is covered in this chapter. The philosophical position of the research is stated, while ‘why’ qualitative approach is most suitable for this study is highlighted. The choice of data collection and sampling methods and data analysis are also covered in this chapter, as well as the study’s limitations, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration. This chapter concludes with the theoretical framework of the research.

3.2 Philosophical position: Phenomenology and social constructionism

This research used the phenomenological approach to investigate the phenomenon under study, as the intention was to describe and interpret the participants lived experiences (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021; Creswell, 2013). In this approach reality is constructed as an intentional interpretation of our sense of perception, against a backdrop of pre-existing conceptual categories, derived from life experiences in interactions with others (Connelly, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Flick, 2009; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Thus, my interpretation of the data, method of data analysis, and design of the interview guide were important research processes, and combining the research processes with inductive reasoning, allowed the data to guide me into probing intriguing perceptions that developed from the interviews. This links appropriately with the semi-structured interview used for this study, it made interviewing explorative by asking more questions based on the replies, responses and answers of the participants, thus generating valuable conversations and thick data around the research theme and/or question (Connelly, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Social constructionism was another philosophical position considered for this study. This approach states that we construct our own reality via social interactions, relationships, and experiences. In this approach the ontological perspective is that reality is contextual and socially relative, and that there are multiple realities (Pryce et al., 2014). If realities are created then our knowledge and meanings are gotten from social interactions, hence the epistemological notion of reality is that reality is constantly negotiated by the meaning that people attribute to them (Cypress, 2017; Pryce et al., 2014). The implication for research is that the findings from the data are interpreted via the way the researcher utilizes and interprets the

data, thus the data is meaningless on its own. Truth is constructed based on the participants' and the researcher's experiences, knowledge and interaction with the social environment (Pryce et al., 2014).

Both phenomenology and social constructionism, are embedded in the notion that all knowledge and understanding of the world comes from our experiences (Connelly, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Cypress, 2017; Pryce et al., 2014). In this approach the researcher exposes hidden meanings and seeks to reveal taken for granted assumptions, as reality is subjectively based on lived experiences and perceptions (Cypress, 2017; Pryce et al., 2014; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

The implication for research is that the researcher cannot presume or assume they know the meaning of people's experience(s) in context (Pryce et al., 2014). Rather the job of the researcher is to unravel taken for granted assumptions, and as such they must first understand the bias, prejudice and assumptions they bring into the research (Pryce et al., 2014; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). However, the researcher cannot exist or work outside their experiences and assumptions, hence the need for introspection, and keeping these prejudice, bias and assumptions in mind when analyzing the data (Pryce et al., 2014; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007)

3.3 Research method and design

This study utilized the qualitative research method. Qualitative research is the process of inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena within context. It focuses on the what, how and why of human and social phenomena, as it relies on opinions and experiences of human beings as meaning making agents of their everyday life (Butler-Kisber, 2018; Flick, 2009, 2017; Silverman, 2016).

Qualitative research uses a multisystemic lens to study social phenomena and uses different approaches such as case study, discourse analysis, phenomenology, ethnography amongst others. The qualitative research approach tends to be flexible and focuses on retaining its rich meaning when interpreting data (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021; Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2016).

This study used phenomenological approach as a method of inquiry, which engages in the description and interpretation of lived experiences and perceptions of social actors in context (Connelly, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Pryce et al., 2014; Qutoshi, 2018). Phenomenology has two main approaches namely descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology.

According to Qutoshi (2007) descriptive phenomenology describes subjective realities, perceptions, motivations and actions of the research participants in relation to the phenomenon, and to achieve this, the researcher must bracket him/herself. Bracketing is the process where the researcher sets aside his/he own prejudice, bias, assumptions and presuppositions (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021; Qutoshi, 2018; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). While interpretive phenomenology argues it is not possible or necessary for the researcher to set aside prejudice, bias or assumptions because we are bound by our ideologies, experiences and position in the world, hence it would seem pretentious to deny all these influences on our thoughts. Thus, the researcher must engage in self reflection in order to analyze the data without bias (Connelly, 2010; Cypress, 2017; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

In this study both approaches of phenomenology were used to explore and understand African immigrants' experiences of transnationalism, the labor market, social networks or groups, their perceptions of language use in context, dominant discourses on immigrants in Norway and the role of the media, the importance of the Norwegian language and its access and/ or limitations to opportunity and resources, the Norwegian society and how these experiences and perceptions shape their self conceptualization and othering as well as how this conceptualization and experiences foster and/ or hinder integration into the Norwegian society.

The importance of qualitative inquiry is that it gives a unique depth of understanding while participants can freely discuss and/ or disclose their experiences, thoughts and feelings without constraints and at the same time, the researcher is able to follow up on the replies, responses, and answers given by participants in real time thus generating thick data around the research theme or research question(s) (Creswell, 2013; Flick, 2009, 2017). Thus, the quantitative approach which lacks the advantage of increasing the researcher's understanding of the relationship between language use and the conceptualization of self and others experienced by African immigrants in the Norwegian context was inappropriate for this study. Taking into cognizance that the research questions are concerned with exploring and investigating African migrants' experiences, opinions, interpretations, feelings and perceptions, qualitative research with an inductive approach was most suitable for the purpose of this study.

3.4 Sampling and recruitment

This study sample size was seven(7) people who were chosen using purposive strategy. The following criteria were used in selecting participants: samples must be immigrants of African descent who are living in Norway for at least one year. In line with NSD (The Norwegian Center for Research and Data) regulations, participants' identities were protected with pseudonyms.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique used in qualitative research as the method is used to obtain reliable, quality data (Tongco, 2007). In qualitative research data collection depends on the context and objectives of the research, hence purposive sampling helps in selecting participants who are members of the community of interest, and are able and willing to share knowledge (Given, 2008; Tongco, 2007). Holmes, (2020) stresses the need for openness and transparency on the roles and possible biases of qualitative research participants.

Although purposive sampling was employed in this study. It was still challenged in reaching prospective participants. Some potential participants who I made contact with refused to participate for personal, undisclosed reasons. While others were travelling. Of the seven participants who participated in the interview, six were interviewed in person and one person was interviewed online. The participants were four women and three men.

3.5 Data collection

Data collection in research depends on the context and objective(s) of the research (Adu, 2019; Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Flick, 2017). According to Baumbusch (2010) the interview is the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research. There are three types of interviews namely unstructured, structured, and semi-structured.

The unstructured interview follows the direction of the responses or answers of the participants, it is comparable to a conversation (Baumbusch, 2010). The structured interview is guided by a set of preplanned questions, the researcher does not deviate from these questions when conducting the interview (Baumbusch, 2010). The semi structured interview involves a set of open-ended questions that allows instant and in-depth responses and probing if necessary. The process of using semi-structured interviews are developing an interview guide, conducting the interview and then analyzing the data (Baumbusch, 2010; Galletta, 2013).

In this study data were collected via semi-structured interviews with the use of an interview guide (see Appendix 2). The interviews which were conducted from January to March 2023 were conversational in nature with the aim of obtaining data rich in context. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. According to Adams, (2015) semi-structured interviews gives room for multiple, divergent and contradictory information that can improve the study, unlike structured interviews that do not provide room for flexibility.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is an important component in qualitative research, it uses three sequences – data reduction, data display and verification (Oancea & Punch, 2014). Due to the nature of qualitative data, it is vital to pick out themes, cut, change, or code the data which makes it readily accessible and comprehensible. I cross-checked the audio recording and the transcribed version for accuracy and correctness.

Consequently, transcripts were tagged with alphanumeric codes to comply with anonymity of participants. Interview participants were given pseudonyms Sisi, Olu, Ike, Tope, Osas, Ola and Etin. Thematic analysis was complemented with critical discourse analysis (CDA) in the analysis of the data.

Thematic analysis is a method that allows the researcher to tag the frequency of a theme with one of the whole content (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ibrahim, 2012; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). It is also used to analyze classification and present themes or patterns that relate to the data as well as identify and describe, implicit and explicit ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2011; Ibrahim, 2012; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Further, the researcher interprets the data in relation to the research question(s) or/and research theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method and not a methodology, which implies it is not tied to any particular epistemological or theoretical framework, thus making it a very flexible method (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ibrahim, 2012; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

The argued limitation of thematic analysis is that there is no clear scholarly agreement about what thematic analysis is and how to go about doing or using it (Ibrahim, 2012; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The thematic analysis was complemented with critical discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting and explaining the ways discourses construct, maintain and legitimize or validate social inequalities (Mullet, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

CDA sees language not as an abstract, but as words that have meaning in context (Mogashoa, 2014). At the same time the approach deals with discourses of power, injustice, inequality and also attempts to uncover implicit or concealed power relations. For example prejudice and oppression are reproduced in daily life via political and media discourses and these discourses contribute to cultural reproduction of discrimination and social exclusion (Ibrahim, 2012; Mogashoa, 2014; Mullet, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2009)

CDA systematically explores often unclear relationships of causality and determinations between discursive practices, events, text and the wider socio-cultural structures, relations and processes to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise and are ideologically shaped by power relations, privileges and oppression (Mogashoa, 2014).

CDA is aligned with the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of this study with its focus on language and migrants' conceptualization of self and others.

Initial and focused coding was used for the study, while the transcribed interviews in the Microsoft Word document were read repeatedly to garner the foremost (initial) idea about patterns appearing from the data. Initial coding could be line-by-line coding, in vivo or both. Line-by-line coding is coding each line of the transcribed data (Charmaz, 2014). I made conscious efforts to remain open-minded about the data not allowing pre-conceived notions to influence the data. The initial codes were generated in conformity with the data. The interview transcripts were manually coded using names and phrases for each line. Some of the emerged codes include "identity crisis", "language barrier". However not every line in the transcript was coded, this was due to its irrelevance to the research question. At the start of the coding participants distinct expressions were used, which served as a memo of preserving participants viewpoints. Memos were written down while initial analysis was done to capture themes, ideas, and arguments that were developed. The memos became the connection between data and analysis (Charmaz, 2014). The following is an example of a memo

Language barrier

Participants agreed it was difficult to navigate the Norwegian system when an immigrant could not understand or speak the language (Norsk). This implied that access to resources and opportunities were hindered they claimed, as language was not just a means of communication but also the foundation of integrating into the Norwegian society.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are important when conducting research, as ethical norms support the aims of the research in relation to issues such as knowledge, understanding, truth, reality, perception, subjectivity, objectivity and avoidance of error. Ethical norms prohibit fabrication, falsifying and misrepresentation of research data, findings, and interpretation (Gajjar, 2013).

Thus, the ethical consideration for this study include:

Honesty- I ensured that the findings of the research were correctly reported without the data being influenced by my assumptions, bias or preconceived notions and participants were informed about the nature and scope of the research.

Objectivity- qualitative research is an inquiry with a focus on subjectivity (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Silverman, 2016), therefore using phenomenological approach in this study allowed for objectivity(that is the true value of the research) in the research design, data collection, analysis and interpretation. The approach calls for self-reflection while ensuring that personal bias and prejudice of the researcher does not influence the research findings (Connelly, 2010; Cypress, 2017; Pryce et al., 2014; Qutoshi, 2018), which does not remain a contentious issue in qualitative research.

Confidentiality- participants were assured confidentiality and anonymity by using pseudonyms to represent them in the data. Heaton (2022) maintains that researchers must remove the actual or real names from responses, and or replies during the recording and coding process.

Informed consent- Participants in this study were furnished with an informed consent form (see Appendix 1) to sign as an indication that they voluntarily participated in the research; verbal consent was also requested for in the audio recording of the interviews. The informed consent form detailed the rights of participants and the purpose and objectives of the research. Participants rights included they could withdraw from the study at anytime without prior notice or consequence.

Data protection- the data were stored in a password protected computer, data were anonymized, while participants were assured that the recorded interview was only for the master thesis and their data will be deleted once the projected was completed.

Prevention of harm- I ensured that the research and interviews did not cause physical, or psychological harm to participants, by making sure they were relaxed and comfortable during the interview. The participants chose the location for the interviews, and they could choose not to answer questions they considered sensitive.

Power dynamics- researchers are seen in power position because they have ownership of the research (Foucault & Gordon, 1980), thus I informed participants they had the right and liberty not to answer any question(s) they were not comfortable with.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from NSD- The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS (see Appendix 3)

3.8 Limitations of the study

Subjectivity – As an African immigrant living in Norway, my socio-cultural constructions, religion, education, ideas, experiences, prejudices, and gender are all possible research biases in this study. To minimize this, I adopted the stance of critical reflexivity, and through the thick description of data, I presented the voices of the participants.

Participants emerged from only two African countries; thus the findings cannot be generalized to African immigrants living in Norway. also given the small-scale nature of the study, the findings cannot be generalized to others even from the same countries. With qualitative research, the aim is not generalizing data, but to analyze data in context and provide thick description of the data (Boddy, 2016; Gajjar, 2013).

In this study only immigrants of African descent who spoke English were participants in the research, thus the perspective of non-Africans migrants living in Norway and the perspective of African immigrants who did not speak English were not captured. Similarly views of ethnic Norwegians were not heard to clarify, debunk or throw more light on African immigrants' conceptualization of others.

3.9 Trustworthiness of the research

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is hinged on confirmability, credibility and transferability. According to Mustafa, (2021), Sargeant (2012) and Stensaker (2008) confirmability is to be aware of one's prejudice. To ensure credibility of the findings, the interviews were documented using an audio recorder, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and a summary of the transcribed data was presented to each participant to ensure that the

themes developed mirrored their perspectives. To ensure the confirmability of the study, I provided detailed descriptions of the study methodology, including the study method and design, the philosophical underpinnings of the study, the inclusion and exclusion criteria of sampling, sample characteristics, data collection and method of data analysis, and ensuring that the voices of the participants are presented in the analysis of the data. This kind of audit trail makes it possible for the reader to appreciate both the strengths and limitations of the research, and for possible replication of the study.

Furthermore Mustafa (2021) Sargeant (2012) and Stensaker (2008) stated that credibility is the researcher's expertise to express participants actual lived experiences from their point of view. Hence to ensure this, data collected, and transcripts of data analyzed and findings were shared with participants, and participants views are reflected by direct quotes. While data cannot be generalized, the study findings might be transferable to migrants with similar characteristics and backgrounds as those included in the study.

3.10 Theoretical framework

Critical theory was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study. This framework is relevant to the research since the study's paradigm harmonizes with it. Critiquing is a means to connect to what is recognized in daily living with a profound and more logical knowledge (Thompson, 2017). The connection of the theory with the study is the explorative focus of the theory, the subjective interpretation of the phenomenon under study and the range of perspective within the theory.

Critical theory is a school of thought hinged on the scrutiny and critique of society and culture, drawing from knowledge within the social sciences and philosophy (Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006; Harcourt, 2023; Moisiu, 2013; Thompson, 2017; Tyson, 2023). The theory critiques, reveals, and challenges social structures of power and ideologies behind discourse, thus illuminating causes that remain hidden (Bohman, 2005; Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006; Tyson, 2023; Wake & Malpas, 2013). It also engaged with questions, ideas, and issues crucial to our experiences of identity, culture and society, as well as focusing on ways which literature, art, the media, history and individuals communicate and interact in the world we live in (Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006; Harcourt, 2023; Moisiu, 2013; Thompson, 2017; Tyson, 2023).

Critical theory also aims at producing knowledge that helps social actors emancipate themselves from discrimination and marginalization to advocate for social justice and social

change (Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006; Griffiths, 2009; Harcourt, 2023; Thompson, 2017; Tyson, 2023; Wake & Malpas, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Using critical theory in this study, with the findings from the data reveals that African immigrants in Norway retain their cultural identity with a transnational perspective in the Norwegian context. It also shows their struggles to position themselves in a transnational perspective as well as balance or harmonize their layered identities, and at the same making meaning of how ideological hegemony constructs them based on media messages and their resistance towards these constructions by deconstructing themselves based on their ideology, beliefs, and cultural values etc.

Looking through the various perspectives of critical theory, structuralism (McGowan, 2006), was used as one of the many frames. Media messages on African immigrants depicts constructions of inferiority, low class, lack of education and a people whom the welfare state may have to spend more on (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; McIntosh, 2015; Stören, 2004), in order for them to ‘properly fit’ into mainstream society. Such assumptions call for questioning taken for granted assumptions, critical reasoning and deconstruction, and promotion of social justice and social change in context.

Moreover, the perception of African immigrants as uneducated and therefore ‘unqualified’ in terms of requirements for skilled labor has led to the low employment rate of this group of migrants, which is linked to discrimination and marginalization. These assumptions from the collective consciousness calls for investigation of social structures like the media and social practices that reproduce oppressions and privilege. According to Griffiths (2009), the issue of bias and the associated issues of perspective, position and prejudice are relevant to understanding and carrying out critical research.

Disseminating information is through language, and language, according to McGowan (2006) is the primary system of cultural existence and it works to structure what we think and what we know. Hence the repetition of negative information about African immigrants solidifies constructed knowledge of discrimination and marginalization. Critical theory engages with questions, ideas, and issues crucial to our experiences of identity, culture, and society (Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006; Harcourt, 2023; Thompson, 2017), which calls for examination of dominant discourses and the social structures and institutions that keep dominant discourses and practices in circulation.

According to Fairclough et al (1997), in the process of construction of self in society, individuals internalize discourses, such that discourses control and organize what can be talked about, how and to whom. In their arguments the researchers stated social practices have meanings because they conform to discourse principles.

Using critical theory to explore integration in context gives insight into how acceptance and social inclusion can be used as a platform and a bridge to connect with policy to better implement integration.

Critical theory proposes that liberation and emancipation can be attained only when critical theory is explanatory, practical, and normative. In addition, critical theory aims to challenge, critique and question privilege and oppression. According to Eaglestone & Holloway (2006), Tyson (2023) and Wake & Malpas, (2013) language is cultural and therefore open to criticism and change, hence if linguistic meaning were naturally given why for instance do we have more than one language? Thus the meaning of a word is on the basis of complex linguistic and cultural structures that differentiates between truth and false- reality and fantasy and good and evil and all these are inevitably linked with value judgements and political questions, cultural identity, experience, knowledge and desire.

In conclusion, critical theory aims to question the validity of common sense claims about experience, knowledge and myth. Hence the theory explores our fundamental beliefs about existence and questions the guiding (social) structures and supposition that organize our interactions (Eaglestone & Holloway, 2006; Tyson, 2023; Wake & Malpas, 2013).

The theory does have its limitations. According to Harcourt (2023) within contemporary critical thought, there are sharp disagreements about how to methodologically proceed in a field that has different epistemological and ontological positions. At the same time critics of the theory point out the Eurocentrism of the theory.

The insight provided by qualitative research inquiry was the lens through which the data were analyzed and the research findings discussed in relation to literature and the theoretical framework. This is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter 4

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the data obtained from the participants are presented, analyzed, and discussed. To provide context for the population from which the data was drawn, the first part of this chapter contains socio-demographic information of the study participants. The second part of the chapter addresses the research objectives. Three research objectives directed this study, which were to: (1) identify how the language used by immigrants of African descent reflect their conceptualization of self and others; (2) investigate the relationship between immigrant's self-conceptualization and dominant discourses on immigrants in the Norwegian context and (3) find out how dominant national constructions and immigrant's conceptualization of self hinder or foster integration in the Norwegian society.

In line with thematic analysis complemented by critical discourse analysis, the perceptions of African immigrants were drawn into categories and presented in response to the research questions.

The findings from the interview data are discussed in this chapter. The discussion is done by comparing the research findings with existing literatures and prior research. The theoretical framework is discussed in relation to the research findings and supported by scholarly texts. The discussion has been integrated with direct quotes that were used to establish connections between the data and the discussion

4.2 Socio-demographic information of participants

The study involved seven participants, four women and three men. These participants voluntarily participated to share their constructions (conceptualization) of self and others, influences of the media in these constructions, the language of these constructions in relation to dominant discourses on immigrants in context and factors or variables that hinder or foster integration into the Norwegian society. Participants originated from two countries in the continent of Africa and have lived in Norway from between 16 months to 23 years. There is a major significance with regards to experience from the length of stay in Norway. This could help in analyzing the study's findings from the perspective of these immigrants

Names	Gender	Time in Norway	Marital status	Age range	Education	Reasons for migration	Country of origin
Sisi	F	23 years	Married	30 -40	Bachelors	Family reunification	Uganda
Olu	F	17 years	Married	40-50	Masters	Family reunification	Nigeria
Ike	M	16 months	Single	20– 30	Masters	Studies	Nigeria
Tope	F	13 years	Married	40- 50	Masters	Family reunification	Nigeria
Osas	F	18 months	Married	30- 40	Masters	Studies	Nigeria
Ola	M	4.5 years	Married	30- 40	Masters	Studies	Nigeria
Etin	M	12 years	Married	40- 50	Masters	Labor	Nigeria

Brief description of participants

Sisi was an educated environmental therapist and has lived the longest in Norway among the participants of the research.

Olu was a lawyer by profession and an entrepreneur in Norway.

Ike was a master student and worked as a part-time bar tender.

Tope was an educated document controller, she had a full-time job.

Osas was a master student and at the time of this study was unemployed.

Ola was an engineer and worked in an international organization.

Etin was an engineer, and a pastor. He worked in an international organization.

The first research question sought to identify and investigate how the language used by immigrants of African descent reflect their conceptualization of self and others. The major themes that emerged from the data were transnationalism and cultural identity, with sub-themes of identity crisis, creating a new identity, discrimination and the language barrier. The discussion is supported with by direct quotes from participants.

Participants had a myriad of reasons for relocating, but two reasons stood out which placed them into two categorized groups. One group relocated for studies, participants in this group got admission to graduate schools in Norway, while the other group relocated on the bases of family reunification, they came to join their spouses in Norway.

Six of the seven participants were of Nigerian descent and all participants in the study were university graduates, which might be reflective of sampling bias as I accessed participants primarily from my networks. However according to Baker (2022) Nyamnjoh (2005), and Zeleza (2021) there's an increasing demand for higher education in Africa due to population growth, poor infrastructural development, lack of funding for educational research as well as increased pressure on African educational institutions from the West to be internationally competitive. These maybe the reasons why participants are highly educated. At the same time Western conceptualization of education in Africa has induced and internalized a sense of inferiority in Africans, hence a drive to prove their educational competence by schooling abroad (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Zeleza, 2021).

4.3 TRANSNATIONALISM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Upon relocation to Norway the racial and cultural difference were more obvious to participants, being away from “home” as they termed their countries of origin. Participants cluing to their cultural identity as a way of staying with the familiar in a new country. Participants had this to say:

...so when you're home, you keep hold of your culture...the first half of my life is in Uganda and that's my foundation...so am influenced by the life I live here in Norway with a foundation of the Ugandan culture... (Sisi)

...I don't think I would consider myself as an African...coming to Norway...opened my eyes to the fact that am an African...I've always seen myself first and foremost a Nigerian...I grew up knowing am a Nigerian... (Olu)

From the findings, participants retained their cultural identity while being immigrants in a new country, which showed their transnational identification. Sisi displayed her cultural identity by identifying herself as a transnational in context, according to Burholt et al (2016), in cultural identity, migrants feel they belong to the country in which they reside and their country of origin. Thus, Sisi's self-conceptualization is a harmonized blend of her social identities. From her narrative Olu constructed herself as a Nigerian, her national identity, however her national

identification was challenged through her social interaction with actors in the Norwegian context who saw her as African and not a Nigerian. As she was constantly reminded through racialized discourse that she was in a category ‘African’, her obvious marker of difference (for example skin color and hair texture) placed her in a generalized, homogeneous African category. Thus, Olu seemed to have internalized this generalization of being African and her self conceptualization was reconstructed to reflect this position. In contrast Africa is a heterogenous continent with more than fifty countries and diverse cultures which are distinct and unique (Achieng & El Fadil, 2020; Hovy et al., 2020). Therefore, categorizing all Africans as the same irrespective of their countries of origin is eroding the individualism of the migrant and altering their self-conceptualization. As a transnational, holding unto cultural identity, is vital since there is the interconnection of nationality, identity, language and race (Flem et al., 2023). Scholars argue that self conceptualization is developed within the social context of a person’s environment, and that it is a multi-dimensional construction influenced by social factors, environment and biology (Marsh et al., 2012; Rahim, 2010). Reflecting on Olu’s self-conceptualization the concept of the ‘looking glass self’ supports her construction of self. The concept posit that individuals learn to view themselves based on how the society sees them and that self is a social product (Rahim, 2010). This process is achieved when people construct their identities by internalizing perceptions of themselves that they think others see them, thus they embrace those appraisals of themselves that they see reflected in their social environment (Marsh et al., 2012; Rahim, 2010).

4.4 Identity crisis

Participants expressed the view that moving to Norway brought a sense of identity crisis to them. In settling into a new country and culture, they realized they had a new identity – the identity of being an immigrant (Marsh et al., 2012; Rahim, 2010), a foreigner, which clashed with their previously established cultural identity. From their narratives they had to accept this new identity(which is now a layer on the cultural identity). Olu’s voice, depicted below, is reflective of the pervasive views of the participants.

...I became aware of the fact that am African...and...seeing the difference and how people are treated differently just because they’re African...it made me realize if you’re stripped from Africa you’ll be treated differently because you’re perceived as...a black person...someone they could easily get on well with... (Olu)

Participants narratives were filled with a sense of pain of being seen not as an individual, rather being constructed as ‘other’, this has challenged their self conceptualization, identity, and perceptions. The attribution of the identity of being an ‘African’ was to be different, socially excluded, marginalized and not being recognized as an individual. This supports the concept of othering. According to FEPS - Future University in Egypt & Ahmed AbdulMegied (2022), othering is a pattern of behavior that brings down different minority group, it involves the notion of social exclusion. In its definition othering is a process through which identities are set up in an unequal relationship, and at the same time a discursive structure and formation of subjectivity caused by such discourse. It involves the use of stereotype, discrimination and negative representations (Brons, 2015; FEPS - Future University in Egypt & Ahmed AbdulMegied, 2022; Velho & Thomas-Olalde, 2011). Othering or ‘other’ can be best understood from European imperialism where the construction of ‘other’ are made via certain practices of knowledge production which legitimize discourse (Velho & Thomas-Olalde, 2011). This perception of being different impacted participants self conceptualization, a process that is constantly updating when one is a transnational. It became a deviation in identity formation, since who Olu perceives herself to be is rather different from the hegemonic construction of her by mainstream Norwegian society which can produce an identity crisis.

4.5 Creating a new identity (the in-between position or the hybrid position)

Participants realized that their layered identities had to be harmonized as, they were nationals of their countries of origin as well as immigrants in Norway. Merging both identities created a third identity which some researchers called the in-between position or the hybrid position. This new identity made them more comfortable knowing they were part of both cultures as represented in the voice of Sisi:

...merging both cultures can become difficult...so I've kind merged both cultures.. am a hybrid...the roots are Uganda, the branches, stem and leaves are Norwegian...there is no me without being Ugandan Norwegian... (Sisi)

According to Bradatan et al (2010) social identity is part of our personality. Migrants are linked to multiple social spaces which gives them different identities depending on the sociocultural space they find themselves in. Harmonizing these identities reflects a determined and conscious self conceptualization, of presenting oneself the way one perceives oneself rather than allowing hegemonic discourses to determine one’s identity. However, Bradatan et al (2010) argues that social identity is created through interactions with social actors in context. They further stated

that a transnational is one who has connection with at least two countries, and these identities complement themselves. Sisi identifying herself in both contexts shows her identity is fluid and not rigid. It also displays her acceptance of her context specific identities. Sisi's comfort in her identification as Ugandan-Norwegian might be linked to long term duration of her stay in Norway. It is nevertheless, salient that even after 23 years "*the roots are Uganda*", which resonates with Shafak's (2021) view that our places of origin "are the shape of our lives" (p.33)

4.6 Discrimination

Participants talked about Norwegians having poor perceptions of African immigrants, which they attributed largely to media messages and projection of African immigrants by not-for-profit organizations. Participants said African immigrants living in Norway were constructed as poor, uneducated, refugees and asylum seekers, which contributed to discrimination against them. The media portrayals did not give them opportunity to be seen for who they are without prejudice. Participants had this to say:

*...from the news and the NGOs...Africans are viewed like people who need help, like yeah poor people, that need help...poor beings that need a lot of support...most times they see them (African immigrants) as someone in Norway say **stakkel**(someone poor)...like someone who has to be assisted...uneducated... immigrants from Africa are not seen as resources, as they have something to add to the Norwegian culture...they are seen as people who are taking something away...in their welfare system... (Sisi)*

...they have watched on TV...black people are stereotyped for certain things, then poverty is one main thing they've always thought with regards to African people...when they meet you, the first thing...you are just generalized from Africa...so there's this myopic perception that they have of dark skinned people of African descent that they are very backward... (Olu)

...yea but majority of them think that everybody from Africa is an asylum seeker(laughs)...from what they portray in the media...which gives a lot of Norwegians that bad perspective...like they show people living in slums, begging for money(laughs) people who are suffering, that's CNN propaganda(laughs)... (Tope)

Dominant discourses on African immigrants from the findings reveal the poor perception of immigrants generally in the Norwegian context, there's a lot of assumptions and unverified facts among the collective consciousness driven by media messages that project distrust, misunderstanding and generalization of immigrants. Race according to critical theory is a social

construct and an invented category to oppress, marginalize, discriminate and exclude people of color (Apollo Amako, 2006, p. 11; Britannica, 2023; Brosius et al., 2019; Sewpaul, 2013). Thus, the constructions of Africans as poor and uneducated is an oppressive social construct, that contributes to negative self conceptualizations. Generalizing immigrants based on race is constructing them as the 'other', intentionally situating them outside hegemony (FEPS - Future University in Egypt & Ahmed AbdulMegied, 2022). Extant literature states though media framing of immigrants is based on specific migrant groups, yet discourse on migrant reportage is often negative and conflicting (Eberl et al., 2018). Thus exposure to such hegemonic messages negatively influences attitudes towards immigrants and incites stereotype (Brosius et al., 2019; Burholt et al., 2016). It is interesting to note that the participants perceived Norwegians to be myopic and easily influenced by media propaganda that represents Africa in archetypical imagery. The sub-text to this speaks to the lack of agency and freedom to think of oneself, which can become inscribed into both majority and minority groups. Thus, the salience of Freire's (2018) that both the oppressor and the oppressed need to be emancipated from the constraints of their thinking.

4.7 Language barrier

All participants of the study originally came from anglophone countries of Africa where English is the official language and they had to learn Norwegian. They also said they were motivated to learn the language for various reasons, ranging from having networks, helping their children with homework, integrating in the society and to get employment. Participants had this to say:

...About twenty years ago when I came not everybody spoke English...having conversations was hard...looking for a job became harder... (Sisi)

...first to make friends, I was very determined when I first arrived in Norway to create a network for myself, not so much for me...but my children it was important they had friends...so I went out of my way to learn Norwegian... (Olu)

...my desire to interact with the locals and further integrate into the society... (Ola)

Participants stated that immigrants who didn't speak Norwegian had reduced access to opportunities and resources and it also hindered integration. They noted that speaking Norwegian was mandatory in some work context. Their responses were:

...they use their native language except you work in IT, technology or oil & gas where they have international customers...health sector, welfare, state, everyday marketing, service job you need to speak Norwegian...even if it is hard...you learn enough to communicate with other people and they understand you... (Sisi)

...for the health sector it has a big restriction, there's no way they will even accept you if you don't know how to speak Norwegian...I think it's a big plus to have Norwegian language for some career... (Tope)

...where I work is an international company, I can still see that my ability to speak the language opens more doors for me (Etin)

Scholars state that transnationalism opens up multiple sociocultural spaces, thus the racialized identities of immigrants though based on country of origin, also implies skill or eligibility for employment and connection to power relations (Darvin & Norton, 2014). Immigrants in Norway negotiate their identities in diverse ways and one of which is to learn Norwegian, which provides access to opportunities and resources. Immigrants invest in language learning because they know the socioeconomic gains and how in turn it enables them claim a range of identities in context, thus when immigrants speak the language, they acknowledge who they are and how they relate to the world and not merely exchanging information (Darvin & Norton, 2014). Hence, participants felt that learning Norwegian was not a disadvantage, rather speaking the language provided an access to opportunities, resources, and integration.

4.8 Discrimination and marginalization

When considering the relationship between society and discourse, and how discourse affects it's participants in context and as well as the social structures that drive dominant discourses, we look at the second research question that examines the relationship between immigrant's self-conceptualization and the dominant discourses on migrants in the Norwegian context. From the findings, the themes developed were: media messages, implication for the next generation, and resistance. These themes were grouped under the category discrimination and marginalization. Quotes from the finding that support these themes are shown.

4.9 Media messages

When asked about the media messages on African immigrants living in Norway, participants argued that the Norwegian media messages were discriminatory and filled with prejudice,

which has caused African immigrants to be marginalized in the Norwegian society. They had this to say:

...I was listening to the radio... and I heard this thing... like an advertisement it was mentioned basically to do with Nigerian swindlers, to be careful with them... shortly after that I had an interview and they(law firm) said oh we've actual clients from Nigeria... and I said what about... and they said we are actually defending them because they are swindlers... the thing is I felt insulted to be compared to a swindler... but this is a stereotype... (Olu)

...from what they portray on the media... they portray the negative aspect of Africa, which gives a lot of Norwegian that bad perspective... they show people living in slums...begging for money... (Tope)

... I think the media messages... about Africa is different if you compare to... immigrants from Syria... Ukraine, Cambodia and those region... in my own opinion the media coverage is bias and more focused on the negative without stressing its causes... (Etin)

Participants further stated that the constructions and projections of African immigrants as inferior also reduces their eligibility for employment. They said having a non-Norwegian name is amongst the barriers to employment immigrants face. They had this to say:

... in the Norwegian society when you are looking for a job, sometimes your name... it is hard to get a job... (Sisi)

... when they see... an African... in the sense the recruiter actually screen your CV mainly by looking at your name... when they see a name they are not familiar with... they don't go through the CV... my own personal experience... my contact person in NAV... she was really helpful, she said she didn't understand why am not getting jobs because my CV was really good... she said she would be honest with me... the main reason she thinks I am not getting a job is because of my name... (Tope)

... I remember a friend of mine in search for a job... she just finished her masters program, she took her CV to drop... she told me... she got to the first place and said she was looking for a job... they said we are not looking for a cleaner... and she said... am looking for a job in the lab, am a lab technician... (Olu)

According to Agyare (2021) racism and discrimination are elements that affect African immigrant's access to employment. Despite Norway's stance and policies aimed at addressing

the challenge, mainstream media's coverage and influence on discourses on immigrants alters the perception of people towards immigrants and this can lead to stereotype, discrimination, and anti-immigrant attitude (Eberl et al., 2018). Research shows that popular media tends to frame immigrants as threats (Førland, 2017).

Participants experiences of discrimination, exclusion and negative construction can be linked to media influences on dominant discourses on immigrants. The challenges of dealing with exclusion and discrimination in the face of having the required skills, competencies and qualifications have impact on self conceptualization as individuals questions their 'self' worth, which can contribute to a sense of inferiority and low esteem. Using structuralism, a frame of critical theory to examine the findings, it shows that language plays a vital role in the negative constructions of African immigrants. As McGowan (2006) stated language is cultural construct and it creates and shapes reality, and it allows us see cultures other than 'ours' as different. This supports research findings that discrimination is socially constructed (Agyare, 2021; Brosius et al., 2019; Eberl et al., 2018; Førland, 2017). Thus deconstructing the hegemonic perceptions of African immigrants can contribute to social inclusion and acceptance, equal access to the labor market and smooth integration into the Norwegian society (Andrew Benjamin, 2006).

4.10 Implications for the next generation

Participants said the negative media messages has implications for the next generation which made them afraid for their children. They had this to say

...it can have negative influence on every family, why do I go to school, why do I do this when am seen as less than my counterpart, so less than everybody, like a secondhand citizen... (Sisi)

...the media just deals with people, forgetting that people are made up of male, female, children... and the media portrays all these things, it doesn't help the children... its tough on the children, tough on the parents... we don't want them going on thinking about... thoughts that can lead to depression, anger, and all that... (Olu)

Participants were afraid of the future, the fear of how their children will cope in these constructed environments of negativism, prejudice and racial discrimination.

Scholarly debate within the last two decades have been on 'to what extent will children of immigrants' assimilate into mainstream society or encounter discrimination similar to or worse than their parents (Midtbøen, 2016). Comparative studies suggest that second generation

immigrants have lower access to employment as compared with their peers. When considering this within the Norwegian context the welfare system, a well-regulated labor market and egalitarian principles, these should have a positive impact on second generation immigrants. Yet research shows that applicants with non-European and non-Norwegian names are 25% less likely to be called for employment (Midtbøen., 2016). The study participants had legitimate concerns for their children as research shows that first and second generation immigrants are not differentiated in the labor market in Norway (Midtbøen., 2016) . From the findings of this study, the children of participants were well socialized and integrated into the Norwegian context via school (education). These children are socially included and enjoy various social networks and groups. Growing up with this foundation of social inclusion, equality and acceptance, when they enter the labor market, and start to face discrimination, marginalization and exclusion which is contrary to how they have been raised. This extreme disparity can lead to mental health issues and related problems.

Moreover, how can these second generation immigrants reconcile with the fact that what they have been taught through social institutions and interactions is not applicable in the labor market? The participants were afraid that these contradictions might impact their children's sense of self as, irrespective of their achievements, they might be seen to be inferior and as "*second class citizen*". These fears born out of dominant construction described as "*tough on the children, tough on the parents*" seemed to be a catalyst to the participants' reflecting a conscious choice to adopt counter-hegemonic discourses to dominant constructions of Africans in Norway. This manifested in their resistance to discrimination, marginalization and exclusion.

4.11 Resistance

Participants utilized resistance as a tool in dealing with the discrimination and marginalization. They argued that they did not allow these negative impressions and constructions to become a barrier or hinderance to their identity construction or that of their children. Participants remained positive in the face of these social challenges. They had this to say:

... it is like I say that is not something I want my children to buy into... I do encourage my kids... you are different, you're an individual, you have your own strength...being viewed like that, instead of it being something that will pull you down... you should use it as a fuel, a driving force to try and break that barrier... know this... am a citizen of this country as anybody... I can give if not more... (Sisi)

... the onus is on the parents to actually try and educate the children and try to give them a different mindset, so they don't go thinking those thoughts we don't want to deal with... (Olu)

... well for me I don't think it has any negative influence, for me am a very positive person... I speak that to my children... just know that you're unique, beautiful, and smart... whatever you hear... don't let it weigh you down... me I don't let it weigh me down... (Tope)

The relationship between agency and structure is displayed by the resistance of participants to negative social constructions of African immigrants, and they build this agency into their children, so the next generation can navigate these murky social spaces with a positive and resilient mindset.

Studies have shown that children of immigrants are not treated differently from their parents when it comes to discriminatory practices in the labor market and hegemonic discourses (Midtbøen, 2016), Using critical theory (Andrew Benjamin, 2006; Tyson, 2023) to explore resistance as agency to challenge othering and dominant discourses on immigrants in Norway, participants drew on their values, beliefs and prior experiences of oppression and discrimination in their home country and at the same time deconstructed the hegemonic discourses on African immigrants and in the process some like Tope, attempted a more positive construction of being unique, beautiful and smart. They held a construction of confidence, esteem and resilience of 'self' and they were determined to break the limitations imposed by the social constructions of them and their children. Through resilience and positive reframing, which falls within the arena of strength based approach, the participants were hopeful that their children would resist these social categorizing and 'othering' and grow up confident and resilient self conceptualizations.

4.12 Factors that hinder or foster integration in the Norwegian context

When viewing society that is moving from being a monocultural to a multicultural one, we consider what aids or hinders this transition taking into consideration the different cultures living in that society. Thus, the last research question in this study examined and sought to understand the factors that foster or hinder integration into the Norwegian society. Themes from the findings were language barrier, school and social networks.

4.13 Language barrier

Participants stated that immigrants who could not speak Norwegian found it harder to integrate into the society. They had this to say:

... so I think it's easier for them when you speak their language(laughs)... they don't have any boundaries, they are kind of free... (Tope)

...there's the language barrier especially for Africans who speak English and little Norwegian and so you don't get as much feedback like you would like to... I think its stressful trying to integrate, it's a never ending project... (Osas)

... it would be difficult if you don't speak the language.. so more of it was integration... so the ability to listen and speak Norwegian also helps... they know its important... I keep developing my language... the people who play a key role in deciding... your move up in a role, these people are Norwegians... so labor marketwise, yes the language is very, very important... (Etin)

International mobility has increased the linguistics, culture and diversity of immigrants (Burholt et al., 2016; Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015; Tsakiri, 2005), and it was from this study that the participants saw the ability to speak Norwegian as a huge cultural resource. Thus transnationalism and multilingualism in the face of movement across cultural, linguistic and political spaces with a focus on identity construction via language (Duff, 2015) will be used to explore language as a factor that fosters integration.

According to De Fina & Perrino (2013) translanguaging is relevant in identity negotiation, mobility and hybridity and it involves the use of cultural resources such as language, music and conceptual constructions. At the same time studies indicate that one of the objectives of the Norwegian government is the participation of its residents in the labor market (Eriksen, 2021). Participants learning Norwegian language provides agency in integrating into the society, and this supports the intentions of the government in the immigration and integration policy (Inclusion, 2023). Multilingualism reconstructs 'self' and acquires a new identity, as the cultural hegemonic conceptualization is part of the reconstruction of 'self'. This new identity gives rise to the acquisition of a new social skillset in social interactions and gives a sense of belonging. It also breaks the limitation of the language barrier as participants who can speak Norwegian have more opportunities especially in the labor market and everyday social interactions with social actors in context.

However, one participant highlighted the economic cost of learning Norwegian, stating that the high cost of learning Norwegian itself is a barrier to integration. He had this to say:

... how do you integrate when you cannot speak the language... access to language is very expensive... if people cannot afford it, its going to be very difficult then to integrate... because in integration language is critical... (Etin)

Speaking Norwegian was imperative to integration, as the language was used in all forms of social life. However, the high cost of learning Norwegian was brought to light as a factor that was contrary to smooth integration. According to De Fina & Perrino (2013), translanguaging involves the use of cultural resources such as language. When immigrants cannot draw on this cultural resource there are social implications, which include exclusion, discrimination and limited opportunities. Thus, the objectives of the Norwegian integration policy is hindered.

In conclusion learning the language shows a willingness to identify with the society, understand the culture and integrate, though it also gives opportunities and resources. Employers are more willing to employ applicants who have some fluency in the local language, as misunderstandings and wrong interpretations will be avoided and the integration process will become smoother.

4.14 School

Participants agreed that schools(education) and social networks were key factors that fostered integration into Norwegian society. They reiterated that their children were well integrated into the school programs and they were treated fairly and equally like their Norwegian school mates. Participants had this to say:

... in Norway, its easy because it's a universal thing that schools are free...as long as you're six years, you should be in school... it's like compulsory... from the 1st grade to the 10th grade, a child should be in school, and the government follows up and ask why aren't they in school... (Sisi)

... my children were never treated differently... everybody wanted to be friends with them... even the parents became my friends so that ...my kids could come for playdates with their children... (Olu)

... they were not treated differently, I always ask them everyday... my kids... they're enjoying school... no complains from them regarding racism or... difficulty in socializing, integrating... (Tope)

... when it comes to children, obviously they don't have any barriers... in Norway here they ...take care of every child equally... (Osas)

... my personal experience... our children are slow to learn the language and when they noticed that, they called us for a meeting and... recommended extra support which was very good (Etin)

Participants stated that education in Norway is an agent of integration and socialization, it provides inclusion and equality regardless of the background of the children. Findings from the study reveals, that school is not only a place to acquire knowledge, but also an agent of socialization and integration. This is in line with the Norwegian immigration and integration policy (Inclusion, 2023) to integrate immigrants into the Norwegian society through education. Nevertheless, integration is a continuous process. Second generation immigrants have transnational identity, which is underpinned by learning processes resulting from particular educational activities and situation (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015). Their self-conceptualization is socio-culturally constructed, where such construction is dependent on cultural voices available in particular social spaces of communication and interactions, and the cultural voices could be dominant discourse and narrative through which people live between two cultures (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015). Despite the positive experiences of their children, the fears of the participants are legitimate as immigrant children in Norway must do doubly well compared with Norwegian children in the same place, as shown on Somali families in Norway (Handulle, 2022, pp. 99–104).

4.15 Social networks

Participants realized that having a social network was one of the quicker ways to integrate into the Norwegian society; they particularly mentioned churches, since most of the participants were Christians. They said the churches were receptive, and they had a sense of belonging within the community there. Participants had this to say

... so we moved to another town... we looked for... found a church... now this one was very different, because it was very open, very warm and allowed for international innovations... and we have been welcomed to be a part of the workforce there, yeah or just participating... (Olu)

... yes quite easy... they have different functions and programs... once you attend and they realize... you only speak English... they find ways to ensure that person... able to communicate... the demographic of the church is a mixture of Norwegians and Africans... (Osas)

Immigrants are transnationals who operate in dual and/or multiple social spaces and social fields with a transnational and cultural identity (Burholt et al., 2016; Lubbers et al., 2020; Tsakiri, 2005) who require social networks to navigate these spaces. According to Burholt et al (2016) a social network could be family, friends, neighbors, new job, religion or a combination of all, with whom immigrants have social ties. Esteban-Guitart & Vila (2015) argued that immigrants have always been at the boundaries of two or more cultures, and this determined their self-conceptualization. Having a social network according to participants eased the integration process, provided them with a positive construction of ‘self’ and gave them a sense of belonging. Studies have shown that the cultural identity of migrants, as members of a social group can be influenced by the extent to which the members of the group give credibility or reaffirmation towards certain social identities. Social networks are particularly useful as they provides new immigrants with information on career, employment, housing and mentors.

Two participants however had a contrary view. They described challenges in breaking into and integrating into the Norwegian society, as reflected in the voices of Sisi and Olu.

... people here do groups... from a young they are grouped through extra curricular activities, after school activities... Norwegians usually socialize like in an organized activity, which we Africans don't... so it can clash and become a barrier for you to get to know people or join... when you join... you can be excluded without them meaning to, because you lack the social norms... there are unwritten rules... (Sisi)

... so when we came to Norway we wanted the full blown experience... we looked for a church... this was a Norwegian church... we experienced a lot of rejections... when we wanted to involve ourselves in the work force of the church... we didn't speak Norwegian... their mindset was you don't speak Norwegian... what can you offer... (Olu)

According to Burholt et al (2016) a social network is an avenue for possible support and determination of one's behavior. This implies there are predetermined behaviors that are accepted or not accepted within social networks. Sisi and Olu experienced the challenges of joining a social network having not met the required criteria or in their case the predetermined

behavior which were social norms and speaking Norwegian. Both participants felt excluded and marginalized and were unable to harness the benefit of having a social network. In her narrative, Olu could only benefit from having a social network when she and her family relocated to another town in Norway.

4.16 Critical reflections

Resistance as a strength-based approach

The constant interaction between structure and agency projects the individual as an agent of change or social agent of the status quo (Clark, 2016). Studies have shown that immigrants usually internalize dominant discourses but participants of the study used resistance as an agency to tackle hegemonic discourses on immigrants. Thus, agency metamorphosed into a strengths-based approach in challenging and countering hegemonic constructions. According to Hammond & Zimmerman (2012) externalizing a problem and separating it from the individual allows them to take responsibilities and to counter the limits that labels put on them. Thus, the strengths-based approach focuses on a person's self-determination (McCashen, 2017), which is a person's right to make choices and decisions (IFSW, 2018).

Using this concept, participants were able to maintain their cultural identity, transnationalism and self conceptualization in Norway, and at the same time harmonize all the above, thus leading to constantly evolving 'self'. Participants disarticulated themselves from dominant constructions of them, as called for by Hall (1985), while drawing on their values, beliefs, and prior experiences as a resource. Five participants learnt Norwegian, the language was used as cultural resource to get access to opportunities, develop their skills and interact with others. Learning Norwegian reflected their better integration into the Norwegian society.

In conclusion, despite the pain and disappointment induced by dominant media and societal discourses, participants were determined about their positive constructions of self, and they talked about an even greater determination to enable their children grow up with positive self-conceptualizations.

Chapter 5

5.1 Conclusion and recommendation

This chapter concludes with a summary of the research findings and recommendations.

5.2 Summary of the research findings

In recent years, the process of globalization has significantly increased international migration (Klingenberg et al., 2021; Tataru, 2020). Immigrants migrate for economic and non-economic reasons (Achieng & El Fadil, 2020; V. Esses et al., 2017; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016), and they acquire dual or multiple identities in various socio-cultural spaces (Bradatan et al., 2010; Duff, 2015; Lubbers et al., 2020). According to De Fina & Perrino (2013) identities are not fixed, they are developed and fluid, while language is an important element in self conceptualization and othering. In their argument McGowan, (2006) and Tyson (2023) stated that language is cultural and socially constructed, it creates the social world we live in and our realities.

Since the late 1960s immigrants have been migrating to Norway (Midtbøen, 2015), and immigrants are subject to dominant societal discourses fueled largely by international and national media. The Norwegian media has exacerbated these discourses (Førland, 2017), such that immigrants are negatively constructed and projected as inferior and uneducated (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Guia, 2016). These hegemonic constructions may hinder the objectives of the immigration and integration policy (Inclusion, 2023) which has a holistic approach on immigration, with the government encouraging immigrants to actively participate in the society through the labor market, education, and language acquisition.

Findings from the study revealed that participants thought the media portrayed immigrants, particularly those from African descent, as inferior, uneducated, poor and as threats, and these constructions influenced how they perceived mainstream Norwegian society. These perceptions, which manifest in discrimination, social exclusion, and racialized practices, contributed to challenges in developing relationships with Norwegians and genuinely breaking into the Norwegian society. While the participants held onto culture, language, and norms of their countries of origin, they learnt Norwegian, which was a huge cultural resource that facilitated communication and inroads into spaces they might otherwise be blocked from.

In the face of their acute awareness of negative hegemonic constructions of immigrants from African descent and the outcomes associated with these, for example the greater challenges in securing a job, the participants through deconstruction, positive reframing and the exercise of

agency, reflected resistance to the dominant social constructions. Their counter discourse was that immigrants were smart, educated, hard-working, and willing to learn the language to integrate into the Norwegian society. Such reframing and resistance are reflective of a strength-based approach (McCashen, 2017). It is their, counter hegemonic views that they hoped their children would model themselves on. Knowing how dominant negative societal messages can impact one's sense of self, the participants made conscious and dedicated efforts to imbue their children with positive self-conceptualizations.

Participants were strongly of the view that learning Norwegian gave access to opportunities and resources and a means of integration, and that education and social networks were vehicles for smooth integration into Norwegian society. None of them perceived the requirement to learn Norwegian as oppressive or discriminatory.

Globalization will continue to spur people to migrate and seek better opportunities (Likić-Brborić, 2018; Munck, 2008), thus immigrants will continue to emigrate to Norway. How then can the Norwegian government harness the potentials of immigrants in her midst? Will hegemonic discourses see African immigrants as resources able to contribute to the society or will the current dominant discourses on immigrants continue. The role of the media in the perceptions and constructions of immigrants in Norwegian society will either complement the government's effort towards diversity and multiculturalism or support right-wing populist ideologies.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study findings and the main conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made.

5.4 Reconstructing dominant discourses

Participants in this study suggested that hegemonic discourses, that represent migrants of African descent as inferior, uneducated, poor and criminal be challenged and revolutionized. Such reconstructions would facilitate the achievements of the objectives and the holistic approach of Norway's immigration and integration policy (Inclusion, 2023), and demonstrate respect for and acceptance of immigrants. It is unfortunate that discriminatory and racialized practices against immigrants still continue, and that even in the face of documented evidence, no conviction has taken place (Eriksen, 2021). The participants stated that African immigrants are resourceful, hard-working and ready to contribute to the development of the society they

live in, if only they are given the opportunity to do so, especially in the labor market. It is these aspects of migrants that are absent from popular discourses.

5.5 Intercultural studies

From the study, and from prior research findings (Rosnes & Rossland, 2018) it was discovered that lack of awareness of other cultures was prevalent in the society, which has led to misconceptions and negative perceptions of immigrant cultures in Norway. Hence, intercultural studies should be introduced at all levels of education. According to Freire & Ramos (2009) emancipation can be gotten via education which develops critical consciousness that leads to intervention and social change.

Immigrants have experiences of social exclusion, discrimination and racialized practices in context, and they live within these social structures that makes them the ‘other’ but through emancipatory education, solutions can be provided that will transform these oppressive social structures (Freire & Ramos, 2009) thus achieving the objectives of the Norwegian immigration and integration policy (Inclusion, 2023). Emancipatory praxis according to Larsen et al (2014) is directed at heightening awareness of external sources of oppression and / or privilege that hold the possibility of increasing people’s self-esteem, courage and conviction so that they, themselves begin to confront structural sources of poverty, inequality, marginalization, oppression, violence and exclusion. This has huge implications for the education of students of social work and for broad based citizenship education. While not explicitly stating the need for emancipatory education, the participants in this study implied it, when they talked about Norwegians being myopic and allowing their perceptions of migrants to be influenced by dominant media messages.

According to Freire & Ramos (2009), “the humanist, revolutionary educator must engage in critical thinking and quest for mutual humanization, thus his (sic) efforts must be imbued with profound trust in people and their creative power” (p.166). Intercultural studies will educate and equip students with skills and competences in intercultural practice to manage a diverse and multicultural society.

5.6 Reduce language fees

The financial cost of learning Norwegian is expensive Though the government wants immigrants to integrate and participate in society, yet the linguistic access for integration is exorbitant thus discouraging immigrants who want to acquire the language skills. The

integration Act provides learning Norwegian and social studies(culture) free for refugees and asylum seekers (Inclusion, 2023), voluntary migrants do not benefit from this Act, hence they have to make provision to learn the language. Therefore, reduction in the financial cost for acquiring norsk will go a long way in assisting voluntary immigrants integrate into Norwegian culture and society.

5.7 Recommendation for further research

Given the small scale nature of this study and that the sample consisted of only Ugandan and Nigerian participants, a larger study could be conducted to include migrants from other nationalities.

While the participants in this study talked about how they thought ethnic Norwegians perceived them, this study did not include their voices. A study on the perceptions of Norwegians towards ethnic minorities and immigrants would give them a direct voice and lend another dimension to the study's focus area.

An interesting finding was that participants reported their children at schools were well integrated and did not experience discrimination. As this was different from some of their direct experiences, they harbored concerns about their children's futures. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal studies that chart when and how the changes occur as children transition from childhood into adolescence and adulthood.

Research on the phenomenon of immigrants in Norway could be conducted using participatory action research (PAR) with both Norwegians and persons of ethnic minority. PAR hold potential to go beyond data collection, to engage participants as agents in processes of deconstruction and reconstruction of dominant ideologies and practices in the interest of more cohesive and inclusive society.

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Appendix 1

CONSENT FORM

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMMIGRANTS' LANGUAGE USE AND THE
CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SELF AND OTHER

Purpose of the study

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information

This is an inquiry about participating in a research project where the main purpose of the research is to understand how African immigrants use language to construct and conceptualize themselves and other (the Norwegian society), while taking into consideration how the society constructs immigrants based on general discourses and media representation.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The research project is conducted by Maris Ozavize Adedeji, a master student at the university of Stavanger studying Nordic master in social work and welfare(NOSWEL). The research is conducted under the close supervision of Prof Vishanthie SewPaul of the same institution. The student and the supervisor are both responsible for the project.

Why are you asked to participate?

Your voluntary participation will be relevant because the research will require information on the topic from African immigrants (project participants) who reside in Stavanger municipality. Participants are expected to be living in Norway for a minimum of one year as part of the criteria for participants in the research project.

What does participation involve for you?

Your participation in this project involves you taking part in an interview after giving consent. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be recorded for further data processing.

Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving reasons. All information about you will be made anonymous, there will be no risks or consequences for you if you choose to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your privacy- how your personal data will be stored

The researcher will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) stipulated in this consent form, your data will be processed confidentially and in accordance with the data protection legislation(the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act). Your personal data will be accessed by the researcher and the supervisor of this project. Any traceable information will be strictly anonymized because of confidentiality.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research

The research project's timeline is 30th June 2023, hence personal data will be anonymized as soon as no longer needed, thus all personal data will be anonymized until 30th of June 2023 and shall be deleted.

Your rights

You have the rights if you can be identified in the data collected to:

- Access the personal data being processed about you
- Request for correction of incorrect personal data about you
- Have a copy of your personal data
- Give or send complaint to data protection office or the Norwegian data authority regarding the processing of your personal data.

The researcher's right to process your data

The researcher will process your personal data based on your consent.

Contact information

If you have questions about this research, or you want to exercise your rights you can contact the University of Stavanger through sewpaul@ukzn.ac.za and mo.adedeji@stud.uis.no or +4740967309

NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: personverntjenester@nsd.no

or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Project leader (Research supervisor)

Student

.....

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project (THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMMIGRANTS' LANGUAGE USE AND THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SELF AND OTHER) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in an interview and for my personal data to be processed until the end of the research project 30 June 2023

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 2

Interview guide

Interview guide for the research project (THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMMIGRANTS' LANGUAGE USE AND THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SELF AND OTHER)

Research questions

How does the language used by immigrants of African descent reflect their conceptualization of self and others?

What is the relationship between immigrants' self-conceptualization and dominant discourses on immigrants in the Norwegian context?

How does dominant national constructions and immigrants' conceptualization of self hinder or foster integration into Norwegian society?

1. How long have you lived in Norway? What is your age bracket
2. What does it mean to you (and your family) to be an immigrant?
3. How would you describe yourself as an immigrant of African descent?
4. What do think the majority of Norwegians think of immigrants from Africa?
5. What are the main media (e.g. TV, radio and Newspaper) messages about immigrants in Norway? What about the messages about immigrants from Africa? Is it the same as for other immigrants or different?
6. What kinds of influences do these messages have on you and your family?
7. What is your religion?
8. What has been your experience in joining any social/religious group in Norway? – has it been very easy to join? if no what are/were the difficulties? can you share your experience?
9. Do you have children in school? If yes, tell me something about your experience as a migrant parent with children at school here. How did you get access to the school? did you have to wait long for your child(ren) to get admission? How were you and your children treated by the teachers, fellow parents, kids peers? what language was used?

10. Do you have a job? can you share your experiences in the Norwegian work environment? is it easy getting along with your colleagues? were you told about the office culture? do you socialize with your colleagues?
11. Do you speak Norwegian? If yes what helped/motivated you to learn the language? If no, what are the barriers? Does knowing/not knowing the language affect the way the Norwegians view or treat you? Does it influence access to opportunities? For example, labor market, hospital, school?
12. If you could change anything in Norway to work better for immigrants of African descent, what would that be?
13. What is your educational background?
14. Are you married? If yes what is your partner's educational background? How old is your partner
15. How old are you? If you are not comfortable saying your age could you tell the age range?
16. Does your partner have a job?

Appendix 3

NSD (The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS) approval

English

Maris Ozavize Adedeji

Notification form

The relationship between immigrant's language use and the conceptualization of self and other

Assessment

Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number

595097

Assessment type

Standard

Date

20.12.2022

Project title

The relationship between immigrant's language use and the conceptualization of self and other

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

University of Stavanger / Faculty of Social Sciences / Department of Social Sciences

Project leader

Vishanthie Sewpaul

Student

Maris Ozavize Adedeji

Project period

01/02/2023 - 30/06/2023

Categories of personal data

General

Special

Legal basis

Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 no. 1 a)

Explicit consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 9 no. 2 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, as long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 30.06.2023.

Notification Form

Comment

ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT

Privacy services have an agreement with the institution you are researching or studying at. This agreement means that we will give you advice so that the processing of personal data in your project is legal according to the privacy regulations.

Privacy services have now assessed the planned processing of personal data. Our assessment is that the processing is legal, if it is carried out as described in the notification form with dialogue and attachments.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR YOU

You must store, send and secure the data in line with the guidelines of your institution. This means that you must use suppliers for questionnaires, cloud storage, video calls etc. with which your institution has an agreement. We give general advice on this, but the institution's own guidelines for information security apply.

TYPE OF INFORMATION AND DURATION

The project will process general personal data and special categories of personal data on racial or ethnic origin and religion until 30 June 2023.

LEGAL BASIS

The project will obtain consent from those registered to the processing of personal data. Our assessment is that the project requires a consent in accordance with the requirements in art. 4 nos. 11 and 7, in that it is a voluntary, specific, informed and unequivocal confirmation, which can be documented, and which the data subject can withdraw.

For general personal data, the legal basis for the processing will be the data subject's consent, cf. the Personal Protection Ordinance art. 6 no. 1 a.

The processing of special categories of personal data is based on the express consent of the data subject, cf. the Personal Protection Ordinance art. 6 no. 1 a and art. 9 no. 2 a.

PRIVACY PRINCIPLES

Privacy services assess that the planned processing of personal data will follow the principles in the Personal Data Protection Regulation:

- on legality, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that the data subjects receive satisfactory information about and consent to the processing
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data is collected for specific, expressly stated and justified purposes, and is not further processed for new incompatible purposes
- data minimization (art. 5.1 c), by only processing information that is adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that the personal data is not stored longer than necessary to fulfill the purpose.

THE RIGHTS OF THE REGISTERED

We consider that the information about the processing that the data subjects will receive meets the law's requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

As long as the data subjects can be identified in the data material, they will have the following rights: access (art. 15), correction (art. 16), deletion (art. 17), restriction (art. 18) and data portability (art. 20).

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about his rights, the institution responsible for data processing has an obligation to respond within one month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES

Privacy services assume that the processing meets the requirements of the Personal Data Protection Regulation regarding correctness (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1. f) and security (art. 32).

When using a data processor (questionnaire supplier, cloud storage, video call, etc.), the processing must meet the requirements for the use of data processors, cf. art 28 and 29. Use suppliers with which your institution has an agreement.

To ensure that the requirements are met, the project manager must follow internal guidelines/consult with the institution responsible for processing.

REPORT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

If there are significant changes in the processing of personal data, it may be necessary to report this to us by updating the notification form. Before reporting a change, we encourage you to read about the type of changes that need to be reported:

<https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/meldendringer-i-meldeskjema>

You must wait for a response from us before the change is implemented.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT

We will follow up at the planned termination to clarify whether the processing of the personal data has ended.

Contact person with us: Janniche Linde

Good luck with the project!

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