

Master thesis

## **Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Inclusion Through the Eyes of Two (2) Double Minority Students at the University of Oslo**

Tapping into the vivid experiences, perceptions and interpretations of two double minority students (LGBTQA+ and Immigrant) concerning inclusion at the University of Oslo

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to God and my dear mother.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study delves into the lived experiences of a double minority student at the University of Oslo. A case study of inclusion through the eyes of a double minority student employs the symbolic interactionism paradigm as the foundation theory coupled with a qualitative semi-structured interview. The empirical evidence of the experiences of the two (2) double minority students in the study confirms that the university environment is very open and accepts all persons no matter their race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation and expression, socioeconomic status, or religious and cultural backgrounds. There is no overt discrimination and violence against double minority students on campus as discovered in this study. Their experiences shared exposed the challenges of ambivalence of belonging and not belonging as well as some invisible borders in the form of cultural differences, in the ability to build solid social connections with the majority group. In the quest to surmount the challenges of social connection with the majority group which can be realized is one of their major concerns, there is the availability to connect with students with similar characteristics, thus, the blend with other international students or students from other minority backgrounds with diverse cultures. As a double minority student (LGBTQIA+ and Immigrant), the respondents have a great feeling that their LGBTQIA part is more accepted by the majority group/locals than their immigrant part.

Keywords: minority, inclusion, belonging, majority group, international students.

**Master's Thesis title:**

**Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Inclusion Through the Eyes of  
Two (2) Double Minority Students at the University of Oslo**

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

### Abbreviations

LGBTQIA:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual.
OECD:	The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
IE:	Inclusive Education.
SI:	Symbolic interactionism
UiO:	University of Oslo
UN:	United Nations
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
NCERI:	The National Centre on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion.

### Definitions

Lesbian:	A woman who is physically and romantically attracted to other women.
Gay:	A man who is romantically attracted to other men.
Bisexual:	Romantic or sexual attraction toward both males and females.
Transgender:	Is someone whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned
	when they were born.
Queer:	A term that involves people who have non-binary or non-fluid identities.
Majority group:	In this study is referred to the locals/Norwegian students.
Environment:	the space where an individual lives and functions appropriately around others with similar characteristics.
Discrimination:	Treatment of someone based on one's identity.
Identity:	A sense of being.
International Student:	A student who holds citizenship outside the host country, referred to in this study as a minority group and or immigrant students.
Double minority:	In this study is an LGBTQA+ and an Immigrant.

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## **1.0 CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Education in whichever form (Formal/Informal) has the potential to liberate the mind and unlock and lift one from poverty. Education promotes peace and tranquility, catalyst economic emancipation, and development of societies and economies in this 21<sup>st</sup>-century era (UNESCO, 2000). The Sustainable Development Goals by the UN hinged on education as the key driver of all the seventeen (17) goals due to the contribution of education. SDG Goal 4 stated, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (Mundial, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2015). Fundamentally, everyone has the right to education without hindrance (UN, 1948). EFA report (2013/14) concludes that education reduces poverty, boosts job opportunities, and fosters economic prosperity. It also increases people’s chances of leading a healthy life, deepens the foundations of democracy, and changes attitudes to protect the environment and empower women. Research has demonstrated that most nations have acknowledged the power, promise, and prospects of education in the development of their societies and the economic well-being of their citizens (Lane, 2012). Apkotu et al., (2014) explained that universities are tools for excellence and generally confer social, economic, and political status on individuals and society. UNESCO (2018) stated that ‘By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a 2 culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development’. Bengt Lindqvist a UN Special Rapporteur on Disability 1994 as cited by Heijnen-Maathuis (2016) stated that “All children and young people of the world with their strengths and weaknesses with their hopes and expectations, have a right to education. It is not our education system that has a right to certain types of children/students. Therefore, a country's school system must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children/students.”

The concept of inclusion began years ago during the civil rights movement in which there was a push and desire to abolish the policies of segregation (Hodkinson, 2011). The Salamanca Statement made at the World Conference in Special Education gave the framework for the

emergence of IE as we have it today (Hodkinson, 2011) and it became part of government policies and planning (Corbett, 2001). The Salamanca Statement affirms that inclusion and full participation are vital and that all students, regardless of their interests, abilities, learning needs, unique characteristics, and socio-economic and sociocultural backgrounds, can access the regular school system (UNESCO, 1994). The mere presence in the school or classroom is not the real deal, but IE is more like the feeling of acceptability, belongingness, social interaction, and involvement in all activities stipulated in the curriculum. The National Centre on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI, 1995) explained that inclusive education is educational services to students with disabilities, interests, and minorities who have access to age-appropriate general education classes with the necessary support and services and behavioral, social and give them the tool for them to fully participate and contribute their quota to the development of the society. Contextually, special educational needs dwell on students who need additional support in their academic pursuit, they may have barriers to learning or being disadvantaged or marginalized group such as gifted/talented students, disabilities, ethnic or cultural minority status, socio-economic challenges/deprivation, people living with HIV/AIDS, LBGT++, etc. (UNESCO/GEM report, 2020).

The policy and programs of inclusion on paper are superb and if executed with fidelity will make society a welcoming place for all. The concept of inclusion usually focuses on issues concerning disability and other psychological disorders that plague the lives of learners. This study deviates from the usual trajectories of inclusive education and delves into the university climate on the inclusion of the life of a double minority student's (an LGBTQIA with a minority background) life experiences, looking at the clash between the student's expectations and the reality on the ground concerning cultural dynamics and perspectives of inclusive education at the university level. The Salamanca statement projects acceptance of all no matter their characteristics, but there is enormous evidence of bullying, and discrimination in the universities, communities, and the world at large against LGBTQIA persons/students and students/persons from minority backgrounds. Sithole (2015) posits that "the social treatment of ethnic minorities, foreigners, homosexuals, women, the handicapped, the elderly and other groups with perceived low or no social power is a mirror of the dysfunctionality of society reflecting prevailing and dominant mentalities in a specific geographical and cultural context" (p. 3). Research shows that students are often victims of name-calling, bullying, and exclusion since they belong to sexual and gender

minorities (Potreat et al., 2009 as cited in Kroneman et al., 2022). LGBTQIA students still grapple with issues of discrimination, and subtle microaggressions (Rockenbach and Crandal, 2016). In such situations, the university environment brings about fear, and hostile classroom settings, which leads to lower grades, truancy, anxiety, lack of motivation to study, and in certain circumstances lack of support from the university administration (Broadhurst et al., 2016).

Contextually, Norway desires that human right is extended to everyone, that homosexuality must be decriminalized, and that states must make frantic efforts to fight against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Government.no, 2023). Currently, Norway is regarded as one of the most liberal countries in the world concerning the promulgation and promotion of equal rights for both heterosexuals and homosexuals (Anderssen & Hellesund, 2009 as cited in Hollekim et al., 2012). The target is to encourage a cohesive and inclusive environment where everyone is accepted and respected in the learning environment (University/Classroom) whilst keeping the line of dialogue open to allow each student to explore and grow exponentially (Biegel, 2010).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The core focus of this study is to delve into the experiences of a double minority student at the University of Oslo concerning inclusion. UNESCO (2005) stated that “IE is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth, adults and through increasing participation in learning cultures and communities and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in context, approaches, structures, and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children” (p. 13).

LGBTQI students undergo psychological distress which leads to low self-esteem, and lack of self-acceptance which could result in delayed identity development and suicidal thoughts (Oliver, 2016). Migrant students usually face numerous challenges like hostility and rejection due to wrong perceptions and racial discrimination on campus (Mwangi, 2016). I explore the perceptions, interpretations, and symbolic meaning of things to the two double minority students

and their lived experiences concerning the inclusion agenda and inclusive activities in the university environment.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The study will unravel the university inclusive environment's condition to the life, social experiences/connections, and academic progress of a double minority student, thus a migrant from a minority group and an LGBTQIA+ student. The study will further add to the knowledge base on issues concerning inclusion and inclusive education in a different form (i.e., LGBTQIA+) instead of the usual inclusive education of students with educational needs, thus, physical, psychological, learning disorders, disorders, etc.). This study is to fill the gap of an absence of adequate papers on inclusion experiences of double minority students in the university environment. Hodkinson (2011) espoused that, there is much concentration of IE on children with SEN, but IE is more concerned with children with SEN, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender issues, age, culture, race, socio-economic status, etc. Finally, the outcome of this research paper will serve as a reference point for policymakers, governments, think tanks, and stakeholders in education to strategize activities and programs to cater to all students at all levels of the educational spectrum in Norway and the world on the inclusion of double minorities (LGBTQA+ and Immigrant)

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Does belonging to minority groups (LGBTIA+ and immigrants) mediate the processes that unfold in multiple spheres of life – University, classroom, work, circle of friends, neighborhood?

Specific research questions

1. What are the positive and negative experiences of a double minority student (LGBTIA+ and Migrant) in a university-inclusive environment?
2. What is the clash between the expectation of cultural dynamics and the reality in the Norwegian school environment?
3. What are the challenges faced by a double minority student on campus about acceptance and feeling of belonging and what is the way forward?

## **1.5 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one encompasses the general introduction which describes the background of the study, the research problem, and questions. Chapter two reviews some existing literature and the empirical context of the study where it touches on the concept of inclusion and inclusive education, challenges of implementing inclusive education, benefits of inclusion and inclusive education, challenges faced by double minority students (LGBTQA+ and immigrant) and inclusive policies and practices in Norway and the University of Oslo. Chapter three discusses the theory upon which the study relies, and the methodology employed in gathering the data. Chapter four reports the results and findings of the data collected, and chapter five discusses the findings from the data, the conclusion drawn, and the recommendations.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter considers the introduction of the study by stating the background of the study where discussions on the importance of education to the individual and the society at large, issues on LGBTQI persons and immigrants, the problem statement, the research questions that guide the study, the purpose of the study, and the general organization of the study.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will look at related studies on inclusion and inclusive education. It will deal on the concept of inclusive education, inclusive education policy, and practices, challenges to implementation, and benefits of inclusive education.

### **2.2 The Concept of Inclusion and Inclusive Education**

UNESCO (2009, p. 4) as cited in Johnsen (2013, p.21), explained inclusive education as, the concept and practice of inclusive education ..., which is increasingly understood more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners. Inclusive education is a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centers of learning to cater to all children - including boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those affected by HIV/AIDS, and those with disabilities and difficulties in learning and to provide learning opportunities for all youth and adults as well. Again, UNESCO (2005) stated that “IE is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth, adults and through increasing participation in learning cultures and communities and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in context, approaches, structures, and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children” (p. 13).

According to Hehir Grindal et al., (2016), Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures, and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision to provide all students of relevant age with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences (p.3). A technical/mathematical definition of IE, Mitchell (2015) explained that  $IE = V + P + 5As + S + R + L$ , in which V = Vision, P = Placement, 5As = Adapted curriculum, Adapted Assessment, Adapted Teaching, Acceptance, and Access, S = support, R = Resources, and L = leadership. The concept of IE is seen as a human rights principle and welfare problem to ensure equality and equity and the promotion of social justice as well as total elimination of discrimination in schools and the community (Ainscow & Sandill,



2010). Similarly, Weinberg (2009) stated, “inclusive language means avoiding negative statements about gender roles (“Don’t be such a girl”), adopting gender neutral terms (parents instead of mother & father), avoiding connotative bias (sexual “preference”) or (“alternative lifestyle”) and avoiding assuming students are straight (p. 50).

Some elements make the agenda of inclusion regarded as really being inclusion. Elements of inclusion on access, acceptability, socialization, feeling/sense of belonging.

### **2.2.1 Feeling/Sense of Belonging**

Johnson (2008) stated that minority students' feeling of belonging goes a long way to measuring the degrees of inclusion and exclusion. Research has shown that in recent times there has been a huge increase in enrolling minority students in the university, but minority students are likely to experience feelings/sense of isolation and the possibility of a sense of not belonging on the university campuses (Davis, 2020). Jackson (2016) opined that student’s sense/feeling of belonging ranges from how they connect with the university and how they identify themselves with others in the university. Similarly, Museus et al., (2018) explained that comparatively minority students report of lower sense/feeling of belonging to their majority counterparts/White peers. Chinyamurindi (2018) stated that enrolling in an institution has two faces, it can be life-changing and at the same time could come with hardship and struggle for students. A sense/feeling of belonging among minority students has numerous advantages, it leads to academic persistence and achievement and positive feelings of one’s self-esteem (Davis, 2020). Findings suggested maximum support of minority students on campus involvement, social relationships, and the school’s conducive environment all played a role in the overall experiences of the students in the university (Davis, 2020). According to Jackson (2016), there has been a positive connection between self-belief, satisfaction from the school, sense/feeling of belonging and participation, and academic prowess. Again Chinyamurindi (2018) stated that students perform and thrive academically if they feel a sense of belonging, an element of inclusion. A higher sense of belonging helps students to have positive mental and cognitive results (Booker, 2016; Garcia, 2019). Students’ participation in extracurricular activities, clubs, affiliations, societies, associations, and social groups has positive effects on students (Astin, 1999). If

students have the platform to live, and work and are more involved in university activities, it leads to academic persistence and retention rates (Astin, 1975, 1999). Han et al., (2018) reported that minority students who do not feel welcomed, supported, and encouraged have a tough time adjusting and being successful in pursuit of academic emancipation. Schieferecke and Card (2013) noted that students who feel they matter in their departments, classrooms, or universities are more involved, determined, committed, and persist in graduating and excelling academically. Depression can set in if students do not feel belonging and their satisfaction rises when they have a sense/feeling of belonging (Palmer, 2016). A study conducted at a university in South Africa to explore how international students gain a sense/feeling of belonging, the study revealed that the feeling of exclusion created the “us and them” syndrome in the university. This syndrome of “us and them” tends to put minority students together (Chinyamurindi, 2018).

### **2.2.2 Socialization/Social Integration**

Socialization is a process whereby individuals learn and internalize cultural norms, codes, and values (Saras et al., 2018). Reber (1985) defined socialization as “generally, the process whereby an individual acquires the knowledge, value, facility with language, social skills, and social sensitivity that enables him or her to become integrated into and to behave adaptively... the dominant usage of the term is concerning the processes by which the child becomes inculcated with society’s values and his/her social roles” (p. 708). Austin & McDaniels (2006) explained that socialization involves internalization of expectations of human collectives, standards set, and the norms of the society in which one resides. The socialization process enables individuals to have access to one or more social groups through which the individuals develop social and cultural competencies as they interact with other individuals and social groups or institutions (Saras et al., 2018). She further opined that “Socialization facilitates processes of inclusion and participation of diverse individuals and groups in society, it also stabilizes social order which includes reproduction of existing stratification by race, gender, and social class (Saras et al., 2018). Human collectives are agents of socialization and need social skills, emotional maturity, and social understanding to engage in meaningful interactions. There is an adage in Ghana that says charity begins at home, that is to say, the immediate family is the first social agent of the child. As Maccoby (2008) rightly stated children and adults are active agents in the socialization

process, as this process begins from childhood throughout the lifespan of human collectives. Socialization does not take place in a vacuum but in an environment and between interactants (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2008; Saras et al., 2018). Crisogen (2015) explained that the type of socialization includes primary, secondary, positive, and negative socialization, formal and informal socialization, anticipatory or adaptive socialization, gender socialization, participatory socialization, associate and institutional socialization which depends on the purpose of the society, the national or political aspirations. The types of socialization are not individualized in that they intermingle, they complement each other and correlate to describe the complex phenomenon of socialization.

### **2.2.3 Primary Socialization**

According to Crisogen (2015), the “fundamental form of socialization is called primary socialization or basic socialization. It is essential for the harmonious and mental development of the child and is satisfied generally by the family (parents), during the first 7-8 years of the child. Primary socialization involves ‘learning the rules of behavior, norms, and values that can be treated at early ages and that is informational and emotional baggage of any person’ (Dumitrescu, 2010 as cited in Crisogen, 2015). The social development of the child or humankind is affected by the environment and the kind of interaction that exists in that environment, for instance, biological, interpersonal, societal, and cultural dynamics (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). His ecological system theory emphasized the influence of the environment on one’s behavior. The theory has five environmental systems which comprise microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, they all influence the individual differently. The microsystem according to Bronfenbrenner captures the innermost level, which is one’s immediate environment which comprises the immediate family, friends, classmates, teachers, etc., where the individual/child interacts mostly with. “From the moment of birth, the child is confronted by agents of socialization, in the first place the family, then the peer group, the school, the church, the office, the factory, etc.” (Brittan & Maynard, 1984, p. 73 as cited in Gill Eagle, 1988). Family connections and interaction are very powerful. In the early life of the child/individual, the immediate family serves as the interaction and the beginning of socialization (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Woods, 1980). In this environment (family) and through

interaction with the immediate family members, language is acquired and the formation of other behavioral tendencies and this forms the primary socialization (Woods, 1980). Initially, the child begins this socialization process from the home environment by simply emitting unreflective gestures, then process to the imitative level where the child begins to imitate and copy behaviors exhibited by the immediate family members (Watson, 2010). Coping and acting out various roles and actions he/she sees or hears. Finally, the child learns to orient and acclimatize with the general perspective of the group (family). Here, the symbolic meanings of which the group attributes to things like persons, actions, norms conditions, etc. (Watson, 2010). Primary socialization aims at transforming children into social beings through the teaching of basic values, norms, training, and language acquisition. Parent-child interaction is social dialogue initiated by both parents from the age of two months and in the months and years ahead, this dialogue is customized, reinforced, and nuanced (Crisogen, 2015, p. 332).

#### **2.2.4 Secondary Socialization.**

The other element of the microsystem level which involves friends, neighborhood, schoolmates, classmates, and playmates falls under secondary socialization. Browne (2011) explained that secondary socialization is realized beyond the immediate family. This kind of socialization is where the individual internalizes specific forms of reciprocal thinking, and the individual can imagine her/himself in different situations or different environments beyond the home/immediate family (Nash & Calonica, 1996). The individual at this stage may be either more receptive or more defensive towards the ideas of the new group or setting, and one must contend with the contradictions, viewpoints, belief systems, and perspectives of the new setting or group (Waksler, 1991; Carugati, 2003). The university environment encompasses the teachers, administrators, schoolmates, and classmates or course mates. One's interaction with them has a tremendous impact on one's perspectives and behaviors. Secondary socialization which involves the university community is acquired in a much conscious faction (Appelrough & Edles, 2011). It concerns the period the individual/child starts to interact with other social environments apart from the family and as the individual grows and matures, the individual enters educational establishments, and formal structures of various groups (Crisogen, 2015).

## **2.2.5 Adaptive Socialization**

It is a type of socialization that has the capability of facilitating integration, social participation, and achievement within a given institutional framework (Crisogen, 2015).

## **2.2.6 Anticipatory Socialization**

This type of socialization prepares the individual for future roles, where the individual goes through training for a specified period, period, and a period is given to the individual to learn behaviors and assume new roles (Crisogen, 2015). Here, the individual rehearses for future roles and social relationships to fit in. Kramer (2010) stated that this type of socialization is referred to as pre-arrival which occurs before an individual joins an institution or organization. Anticipatory socialization comes in the form of learning about a particular occupation, learning about an institution, learning about an organization, and learning about work in general (Miller, 2011). According to LibreTexts-Sociology-Boundless (2023), “anticipatory socialization is the process, facilitated by social interactions, in which nongroup members learn to take on the values and standards of groups that they aspire to join, to ease their entry into the group and help them interact completely once they have been accepted by it”. Anticipatory socialization comes with these common practices, thus, grooming, training, play-acting, and rehearsing. Here, the individual changes his/her attitudes and behavior in preparation for altering one’s role ([www.LibreTexts-Sociology-Boundless](http://www.LibreTexts-Sociology-Boundless), 2023). Individuals reject a group’s values and norms when they find it difficult to access such a group, instead, they start anticipatory socialization to a more receptive group ([www.LibreTexts-Sociology-Boundless](http://www.LibreTexts-Sociology-Boundless), 2023).

Social integration in the university environment goes beyond having positive exchanges, it equally requires teachers, classmates, and course mates to share similar characteristics like culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, and expression for students to create a community of like-mindedness (Jackson, 2016). He stated further that the alignment of events on campus, relationships, and activities with students’ expectations will cause them to be more involved (Jackson, 2016). The bedrock of socialization/social integration is having a sense/feeling of belonging (Hurtado and Carter, 1997). In a similar vein, as much as the positives of involvement in school activities are great, not all students experience the same kind of involvement. Different students have different motivations, inspirations, and interests in what to engage in (Astin, 1999).

## **2.3 Culture and Cultural Adjustment of International Students**

Culture can be explained as the way humans comprehend themselves as members of society which includes stories, religion, media, rituals, and language. The element of culture involves language, norms, values, symbols, and belief systems (www. LibreTexts-Social sciences, Sociology (Boundless), 2023, accessed online on 26/10/2023). According to LibreTexts-Social Sciences, Sociology (Boundless), (2023) culture shock is the personal disorientation a person may feel when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life in a new country or the movement between social environments. Traveling abroad for higher education could have the effect of transforming culture (Tarry, 2011). There could be a confrontation of culture experienced by international students referred to as ‘culture shock’ (Zhou et al., 2008). The impact of moving from a familiar culture to an unfamiliar one leads to the shock of a new environment, a shock of new ways of life, a shock of meeting lots of new people, etc. (UKCOSA, 2007). The differences in culture sometimes cause international students to have minimal or no relationship with the host nationals to avoid the discomfort associated with cultural conflict or cultural shock (Russell et al., 2008). Culture shock has four distinct phases, thus, the honeymoon, negotiation, adjustment, and mastery. The honeymoon phase exposes the differences between the old and the new culture and is seen in a romantic light. Initially, when people are hit by a new culture, there is observation and discoveries of a new culture, after some time the differences between the old and the new culture become more apparent and could result in anxiety. In this negotiation stage, the excitement may pave the way for unpleasant feelings of frustration and anger. Then later the adjustment is made as one gets to acclimatize to the new culture and develop routines as one begins to accept the new culture and elements of the new culture begin to make sense amidst a reduction in negative feelings. Finally, in the mastery phase, one is fully immersed and participates fully in the host culture (www. LibreTexts-Social sciences, Sociology (Boundless), 2023).

International students had to adjust to an unfamiliar culture, education, economy, family, government, and society which is immediate and not gradual socialization unlike what the locals of the host culture have experienced over the years (Brown, 2008; Sovic, 2008). International

students desire to build interpersonal relationships with others, but they find it very difficult to strike strong interpersonal relationships and operate within the new culture which is more individualistic (Boafo-Arthur, 2014). Students from collectivist countries have challenges socially integrating in an individualistic environment or country (Redmond, 2000). Loneliness is one challenge to students who come from collectivist cultures (Zang & Brunton, 2007) and international students are sometimes caught up in a limbo status, as being neither insiders nor outsiders (Sawir et al., 2008). Wang (2021) stated that “the first time a person living in a certain cultural environment enters another unfamiliar cultural environment, the loss of all symbols and means of communication that one is familiar with produces a feeling of being overwhelmed and apprehensive and resulting in a psychological reaction of resisting the new culture (p. 37). Research conducted by Furnham and Bochner (1982) revealed that students from culturally distinct countries find it difficult to adjust socially. But Plum et al., (2008) have a divergent view, they posit that individuals with a global mindset are culturally intelligent and look for partnerships despite cultural differences. Sobkowiak, (2019) opined that over time students demonstrate more tolerance toward cultural differences through positive engagements and interactions with the locals. Campbell & Li (2008) posit that difficulty with language, the challenges of cultural dynamics, unfamiliar patterns of interactions the challenge of socializing with the locals, and lack of sociocultural adjustment have tremendous effects on students’ satisfaction with the host environment. The social connections and social interactions lead to students’ adjustment and social connections with the host environment (Rui and Wang, 2015). Cultural and language barriers have been a challenge for international students to academically and socially integrate with the domestic students or the majority group/locals (Anoushirvani & Golaghaie, 2019).

The acquisition of the majority language has its benefits. As Cao et al., (2017) confirm that having skills in the host language helps with international students’ social connections which in the long run increases the feeling of belonging to the majority group (Wilson et al., 2020). The acquisition of a second language enhances communication skills and promotes intercultural interactions with the locals (Kim, 2007). Hemmasi & Downes (2013) explained that cultural adjustment is necessary in that it will encourage interaction with the majority group/locals and help both minority and majority students to consider the differences or similarities of culture. Wang (2021) opined that for international students, one way for them to improve cross-cultural

competence is for them to gain cultural knowledge through the acquisition and learning of language and learn both the culture and the language more effectively since the two are inseparable. In this case, the 'individual will have different acceptance of their cultural identity and the host culture, according to their internalized culture, their desire for social integration, and their willingness to take risks' (Wang, 2021, p. 38).

Diversity in the university is very beneficial to domestic students in that it increases cultural awareness and helps them achieve cultural competency (Anoushirvani & Golaghaie, 2019). Through cultural diversity, international students of higher education can engage, learn a wide range of topics, and enhance their knowledge and skill set (Balasubramanian, 2...). The cultural dynamics of the school climate and the contribution of the social connections in the school and the classroom have a positive and support the development of and academic development of students (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

## **2.4 Benefits of Inclusion and Inclusive Education**

Literature has demonstrated that an inclusive environment or classroom helps students develop stronger reading and mathematics skills, are less likely to have behavioral problems, have a low tendency of truancy, and have high rates of completion (Hehir Grindal, 2016). Scorgie and Forlin (2019) espoused that when schools are transformed into inclusive communities, it will create the opportunity for all students to have access to and participate in quality and equitable education which will equip them with vital skills to become responsible and contributory global citizens. The enormous positive effects of IE transcend the walls of the school/classroom in an inclusive environment bring about academic improvement, encourage social cohesion among students, and increase acceptability among peers (Greene, 2017). According to Stussman (1995), education is vital, and it is more than what one learns in books. It is about interacting with others. This is why inclusion and inclusive education come in to help curb issues of segregation and support one another no matter one characteristics, race, gender, socio-economic status, cultural differences, sexual orientation, and expression. Inclusive education helps students to understand one another, develop a sense of understanding and respect for each other as they are engaged in group activities (Van Dyke et al., 1995). Heijnen-Maathuis (2016) added that IE ensures the presence,



participation, and achievement of all learners in places of learning. Fisher (1999) opined that increased responsiveness to the needs of others, placing value on relationships with others who may be possibly in minority groups, etc. leads to an absolute increase in tolerance of others maybe their culture, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation and expression etc. results in appreciation of human diversity. According to Peltier (1997), IE helps students to do away with fear of other students or people in the community with unusual appearance or behavior. Society is made of diverse people and students find themselves in a pluralistic world, then extra energy and financial muscle are needed to push the inclusion agenda. Inclusive Education helps all students in the school system to develop social skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, develop compassion, and have smooth relationships with others in diverse communities (Fallow, 1996).

## **2.5 Challenges of Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Several governments have accepted and adopted the concept of Inclusion and IE but there are huge hitches to the interpretation of the principles and implementation of IE at the national and school level (Johnsen, 2013). Causton and Theoharis (2013) stated that educating students with SEN in an inclusive environment remains a goal and a critical challenge for most governments and educational establishments. Wasim Ahmad (2012) opined that numerous barriers hinder the realization of the philosophy of IE which comprises curricular, environmental, attitudinal, communication, and financial and these interfere with the implementation of IE. Similarly, all states that signed on to the policy framework of inclusion try to implement the policy, but issues of characteristics of people, cultural dynamics, and contexts affect implementation (Caspersen et al., 2020). The lack of relevant infrastructure is a major hindrance to the efficient implementation of the tenets of IE (Beyene and Tizazu, 2010).

Noreen et al., (2019) posit that the negative attitudes of some general education teachers could impact negatively the academic and social achievement of students with SEN. Besides the negative attitude of the general education teachers, it has been argued that general education teachers in an inclusive environment more often than not lack the technical know-how or the necessary training and vital resources to enable them to be efficient in handling especially students with SEN (Pearce and Forlin, 2016; Murphy, 2015).

## **2.6 Inclusive Practices in Norway and the University of Oslo**

### **2.6.1 Norway**

The economic stability, safety, wealth, and welfare system make Norway an attractive destination for migrants from many countries/backgrounds (Eriksen, T. H., 2013). Considering the historical antecedent in Norway to curtail discrimination against gays and lesbians dates to the 80s. According to Akin (2017), Norway enacted a law in 1981 to prevent discrimination against gays and lesbians in areas of employment and services, and the Marriage Act of 2009 permits same-sex marriage (Akin, 2017). A survey conducted in Norway in 2008, 2013, and 2017 on the attitudes of Norwegians towards LGBTQ people, the results revealed that there has been a considerably more positive attitude towards LGBTQIA people (Bufdir.no, 2023). A 'Fafo' research was conducted for about 4,445 Norwegians. The report concludes that 25% of the respondents are in support of the state enacting policies of equality and prevention of discrimination of others, while others assert that irrespective of the educational level of a person, some races are more intelligent than others (Ibrahim, H. 2019) The government of Norway stated on its website on the attack that took place on the night of 25<sup>th</sup> June 2022 that, the government deems it necessary to further push to make Norway a safer, more equal, and inclusive society for all LGBTQIA people. Efforts are being made to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, and gender characteristics. The government of Norway further explained that extra efforts will be aimed at LGBTQIA people with minority backgrounds and in religious communities, people with gender incongruence, etc. Government.no (2023, accessed online on 19/02/2023).

### **2.6.2 University of Oslo**

The University of Oslo is an institution that believes in equality and inclusion where everyone has the potential to excel as a student or a staff member. The UiO has a policy document and action plan on issues of Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI). To the UiO, "Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion are defined as a strategic matter for the university. The UiO is committed to these issues being a conscious element in all our activities." (UiO.no, 2023 accessed online). The policy and Action Plan further stipulate that the UiO will be an open and inclusive university based on equality, and respect, and where there is a safe working and learning environment with space for everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity,

disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, age, religion, etc. (UiO, 2023). The UiO Faculty of Law stated that “the Faculty of Law wants greater diversity and balanced gender composition among students. Everyone should feel that they have a place here regardless of, among other things, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, race, ethnicity, and functional ability (jus.uio.no, 2023). The faculty of Humanities on DEI stated that ‘student groups must reflect the society and the city we are part of ‘It made a further pronouncement that recruitment of students be done strategically in such a way as to reach more people and work to ensure students from minority groups and under-represented social backgrounds complete their studies (hf.uio.no, 2023). Practically the University of Oslo has a program on the first week of every semester termed *Buddy Week* where all students are put in buddy groups to encourage friendliness and build connections among students from all walks of life. There is also a language café for immigrant students on campus to allow immigrant students to learn the Norwegian language.

## **2.7 Challenges faced by Minority Students (LGBTQIA+ & immigrant) in the University Environment and the Community.**

Research revealed that LGBTQIA+ students are prone to bullying and violence, victimization, discrimination/exclusion, alcohol and drug abuse, poor mental health, AND poor academic performance (Hanson et al., 2019). A survey conducted at a University in South Africa shows LGBTQI students struggle with labeling, discrimination or marginalization, sexual abuse, and unfairness in accommodation allocation on campus (Sithole, 2015). Similarly, Hinduja & Patchin (2020) reported that youths have been bullied over the years based on their sexual orientation and gender identity and the influx of the internet has increased cyberbullying. They explained further that bullying LGBTQ persons leads to emotional distress, absenteeism, suicidal thoughts and attempts, and substance abuse (Hinduja & Patchin, 2020). Chatterjee, (2014) reported that in certain jurisdictions, homosexuality is illegal and punishable by fines, imprisonment, and the death penalty. LGBTQI students undergo psychological distress which leads to low self-esteem, and lack of self-acceptance which could result in delayed identity development and suicidal thoughts (Oliver, 2016). Kunalanka et al., (2013) posit that LGBTQ students with minority backgrounds are a marginalized group whose concerns are not the top priority by administrators, it is prudent to have a thorough discussion on their safety and life on campus. A survey

conducted revealed that LGBTQ students and LGBTQ youth of racial or ethnic minorities experience homophobic and other forms of discrimination and harassment at higher rates than their peers (Kosciw et al., 2014 as cited in Gartley, 2015). The World Bank/Worldbank.org (2023) added that “notwithstanding advances made in the past decades, LGBTQI people continue to face widespread discrimination and violence in many countries. This leads to exclusion which has an adverse effect on both the lives of LGBTQ people as well on the communities and economies in which they live”. It further explained that “LGBTI people suffer from lower education outcomes due to discrimination and bullying and violence, higher unemployment rates, and lack of access to adequate housing and health services and financial” (Worldbank.org, 2023). Research conducted on migrants revealed that migrants who are queer are subjects of discrimination and stereotyping on issues of sexual orientation and gender, the background of the migrants, and, some double minority persons contemplated suicidal thoughts, about 22% of respondents attempted suicide due to the feeling of alienation (Eggebo et al., 2018). There is an emergence of immigration in general and the attributes of immigrant groups or minority groups usually distinguish them from the host population (Choi et al., 2019). Migrant students usually face numerous challenges like hostility and rejection due to wrong perceptions and racial discrimination on campus (Mwangi, 2016). Mwangi (2016) stated further that migrant student of color face huge challenges in university campuses due to their intersectionality of race and country of origin. Research conducted in Italy on students by Alesina et al., (2018) revealed that teachers “generally hold strong negative stereotypes towards immigrant students” (p. 3). OECD (2014) stated that migrants face more difficulties finding employment compared to their native peers .... An experiment conducted by Gillian et al., (2016) focused on teachers' gazes while watching a video, the result is that teachers gaze longer at black students even if all students were acting or behaving in similar fashion. It is the utmost desire of every immigrant student to have a sense of belonging despite their culture, behavioral pattern, race, learning style, personal idiosyncrasy, and national origin (Obiakor, 2007).

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter cursively reviews literature related to the research topic. It delves into the concept of inclusion and inclusive education. Issues concerning the implementation challenges of

inclusion and inclusive education, and the benefits of inclusion and inclusive education were also looked at. The policy agenda on inclusion and diversity of the university of Oslo and Norway were discussed and the challenges double minority students faced in the university environment.

## **3.0 CHAPTER 3**

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

The chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework that guides this study and the research methodology employed in gathering the data. This study is guided by the theory of Symbolic Interactionism with qualitative methodology. The chapter equally showcases the research design, thus, the study area and population, selection of informants, case study, the data collection instrument/interview and how the data was collected, data analysis, internal validity of the data, and ethical considerations.

### **3.2 Theoretical Framework: Symbolic Interactionism**

The study seeks to delve into the vivid experiences of a double minority student in the university environment concerning inclusive education. The study hinges on the theory of the Symbolic Interactionism paradigm which focuses on people's actions due to how they interact and interpret situations in their daily activities (Blumer, 1962). Humans by nature are social beings, they form symbols, cues, and meanings based on their interactions with the environment they find themselves. The students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds, coupled with their social networks in the university environment have a huge impact on their meaning-making and perspectives on issues in general and for that matter on inclusion and inclusive environments. Malesevic (2004) posits that humanity forms a set of symbols as they interact with the environment and that affects their interpretation of a phenomenon. Blumer refers to Symbolic interactionism as the incorporation of pragmatist comprehension of the behavior of human beings into sociological investigations (Alex D. et al., 2015; Edward, 2015). The theoretical disposition of Blumer emphasizes creative and novel action, life stories, empirical studies, and ethnographies and leans towards the utilization of qualitative methods in studying a phenomenon (Alex D. et al., 2015; Musolf, 2003). The qualitative method permits the researcher to be more immersed in the investigation process where there is a better opportunity to understand the meanings and roles of the respondents (Becker & Geer, 1957).

### **3.2.1 The Genesis of Symbolic Interactionism**

According to Fink (2015), symbolic interactionism was developed in America by some progressive educationists and pragmatic philosophers in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of these progressive educationists and pragmatic philosophers who started this theory at Chicago University are John Dewey, William James, and George Herbert Mead (Fink, 2015; Watson, 2010). George Herbert Mead was influenced by and further expanded the works of John Dewey and William James. “Pragmatism is a philosophy captured in its view that meaning should be understood in terms of its usefulness to the individual or society” (Fink, 2015, p. 2). This notion concerning the meaning of things permeated Mead’s thought and subsequently became a fundamental principle of Blumer’s symbolic interactionism (Fink, 2015). Blumer coined the term symbolic interactionism for his theory of ‘self, interaction and meaning and joint social acts’, to Blumer, symbolic interactionism is the incorporation of a pragmatist understanding of the behavior of human collectives into sociological investigations (Alex D., 2015; Fink, 2015).

Blumer stated that he got inspiration and relied on Mead’s ideologies to propound this theory. He stated.

I rely chiefly on the thoughts of George Herbert Mead who, above all others, laid the foundations of the symbolic interactionist approach, but I have been compelled to develop my version, dealing explicitly with many crucial matters that were only implicit in the thought of Mead and others (Blumer, 1969 as cited in Fink, 2015, p.1).

Mead’s work ‘Mind, Self and Society’ from the standpoint of a social behaviorist is the main source of what is called today symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism (SI) is based on the premise that human life relies on shared symbols as a representation of what pertains (Deegan, 2008). The two schools of thought on symbolic interactionism are the Chicago school and Iowa or Indiana interactionists (Fink, 2015). Their main departure lies in the ideology of the conception of social life and science (Forte, 2010). The Chicago school affirms the theoretical disposition of Blumer, where there is an emphasis on the capacity of the human creative and novel action, the use of empirical studies, ethnographies, and life histories or life experiences. It has a great leaning to the use of qualitative methods of studying a phenomenon in their natural settings (Deegan, 2001; Musolf, 2003; Alex D. et al., 2015). Becker and Geer (1957) conclude that the qualitative method allows researchers to be fully immersed in the investigation process

and they have a greater opportunity to comprehend the meanings and roles of the participants. The Iowa or Indiana school of thought under the tutelage of Kuhn, pushes for the use of quantitative methods such as surveys, questionnaires, etc. in understanding a phenomenon. They have the understanding that, a solid and persistent aspect of ‘self’ and influential power of social organizations and social roles (Katovich et al., 2003; Forte, 2010).

### **3.2.2 The Tenets of Symbolic Interactionism**

The concept of self (I and Me), shared symbols, meanings, social constructs, and perspective formation underscores the idea of symbolic interactionism (Swanzy, 2015). The underlying assumption is that humans possess special abilities and are more complex than other living organisms. Humans possess specific capabilities of self-awareness and reflection, feelings, problem-solving, creating borders, social interactions, and intelligence in dealing with situations (Forte, 2010). Blumer laid out three premises of symbolic interaction. The first premise is that *human beings act toward things based on the meanings the things have for them. ... the second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellow. The third premise is that these meanings are handheld in and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things that he encounters (Blumer, 1969, p.3).*

Swanzy (2015) explained that the first premise refers to individuals, organizations, policies, institutions, groups, objects, and situations humans encounter daily. The second and third premises imply that meaning is derived through socialization and one's action is directed by the interpretation of meaning ascribed to a phenomenon. Humans employ significant symbols such as gestures in creating meanings and meanings are derived from social interactions (Fink, 2015). The theory focuses on social settings and the use of qualitative methods like observation, ethnographic methods, and the use of interviews in the process of gathering data. This study is interested in tapping into the vivid experiences of double minority students, their interpretation, and the social construction of reality. This study utilizes the qualitative interview which permits the collection of rich data and helps in capturing the nuances of personal experiences, interpretations, and perspectives of the respondents on issues of inclusion in the university environment. The theory helps to understand the social construct, the borders, the symbols formed by the respondents in the university, the meaning ascribed to inclusive issues, the



ambivalence of the respondents on the complexities of life and new meanings (Abbey and Valsiner, 2005), where there is the process of making sense of new information, signs or social setting which comes with tensions. Institutions and individuals serve as agents of socialization that assist one to fully adjust and settle in (Klein & Heuser, 2008).

### **3.2.3 Criticism of Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism has been criticized in that it lacks certain ingredients that a theory has but rather be described as perspective school or tradition. Ingredients such as specific phenomena, to be explained, adaptive model, a set of variables, rules for the operation of the variables, and hypothesis (Manning, 2003; Fink, 2015; Alex D. et al., 2015). There are variables of symbolic interactionism, but Blumer did not refer to them as variables. SI has variables like the identity of self, attributes of roles and reference groups, descriptors of processes, negotiations, and interactions among interactants which produce meaning of things for the interactants (Fink, 2015). Again, the conventional ecological view has it that SI neglects consideration of both social structure and power (Sandstrom & Fine, 2003; Alex D., 2015). Symbolic interactionism has also been criticized for not sticking to one method of investigating a phenomenon. Sandstrom & and Fine (2003) explained that proponents of symbolic interactionism push for humanitarianism and positivism while others push for interpretivism and realism. Notwithstanding the criticism, SI has proven to be a force to reckon with. Interactionists have delivered a greater appreciation of the perspectives and experiences of the marginalized, minority, stigmatized, the deviant, and other studies in SI have contributed to reforms in areas of politics (Alex D. et al., 2015). It has been explained that symbolic interactionism does not neglect power relations, but they are the product of interactions of other supra-individual structural forces (Fink, 2015; Alex D. et al., 2015). The notion of self and identity, interaction, negotiation, role, meaning-making, and social construction which are critical elements of symbolic interactionism are taught and studied in Sociology, Psychology, Communication Studies, Social work, and other disciplines. Symbolic interactionism exists through socialization and the self is a social product (Berger & Berger, 1991).

### **3.3 Qualitative Methodology**

Creswell (1994, p.1) refers to qualitative methodology as an “inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building complex, holistic picture with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting”. He explained further that qualitative methodology helps to explore and comprehend the meanings individuals or groups of people ascribe to a social phenomenon. Similarly, Cohen et al (2017, p.289) explained that the ontology of qualitative research regards people as anticipatory, meaning-making beings based on their environment, the meanings used by participants are culture and context-bound. Again, they further opined that epistemologically, behavior and, thereby, data are socially situated, context-related, context-dependent, and context-rich. Social reality, experiences, and social phenomena are capable of multiple sometimes contradictory interpretations and are available to us through social interactions. SI and qualitative methodology both work in tandem in studying human group life and human conduct in a naturalistic way. They both make use of observation, interviews, and life stories of respondents to understand a phenomenon. SI and qualitative methodology see the respondents as active agents and make meaning of social interactions and experiences. They help to solicit a deeper understanding of issues of inclusion through the eyes of the respondents.

#### **3.3.1 Study area and Population of the Study**

The research was executed in Oslo, Norway. The population of the study is all the double minority students in the University of Oslo.

#### **3.3.2 Selection of Informants/Participants**

The focus of the research demands that respondents with the requisite knowledge and who experienced the inclusive environment in the university as a double minority. A purposeful sampling method was employed in the recruitment of the informants. Sampling is seldom representative or random but purposive, intended to exploit competing views and fresh perspectives as fully as possible (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Purposeful sampling permits the researcher to explore information-rich cases where a great deal of understanding of an issue is at stake (Schoch, 2020). I chose this sample due to the uniqueness of the phenomenon as the experiences of a double minority student in the university community. The goal of the study is to

dig into the lived experiences of a double minority university student in an inclusive environment. The study recruited two (2) University of Oslo students who were interviewed, to do a walk-along interview.

### **3.3.3 Case Study**

A case could be an individual, a role, a small group, an organization, a community, or even a nation (Miles et al., 2014, p. 28 as cited in Schoch, 2020; Heale et al., 2018; Stake, 1995). Harling (2012) and Zainal (2007) defined a case study as qualitative research with a focus on the uniqueness of an individual phenomenon and helps to explore problems that could be difficult to address using other traditional methods. Schoch (2020) posits that a case study grants the researcher the flexibility to obtain various kinds of data on a phenomenon which includes observations, interviews, etc., and helps to focus the study within the confines of space and time on a case. Zainal (2007) stated that case study helps to understand the behavioral conditions, and the complexities of real-life situations through the perspectives of the participants. Similarly, Creswell (2002) explained that a case study is an in-depth understanding of a case that takes into consideration the comprehension of an event, an activity, a process, and one or more individuals. The researcher chose a case study to come up close and get a clear understanding of the problem at hand.

### **3.3.4 Data Collection Technique and Processes**

This study relied on the qualitative research method in the gathering of data and analysis. The qualitative research method scientifically answers research questions and systematically uses a predetermined set of procedures to find answers to a phenomenon, gather evidence, etc. The qualitative research method seeks to find answers to a research problem from the experiences and perspectives of respondents. Merriam (1988) posited that the qualitative research method is primarily about processes rather than outcomes or products and that qualitative researchers are interested in comprehending how people make meaning and sense out of their lives, experiences, and their perceived structure of the world. The qualitative research method was used for the research project in that it has assisted in scientifically seeking information about the respondents' views, values, opinions, experiences, perspectives, and understanding of the phenomenon at hand.

### **3.3.5 Interviews**

The qualitative interview method was utilized to seek answers, experiences, and perspectives from the informants concerning issues and dynamics of inclusive education practices in the university where they study. Hochschild (2009) noted that interview does much more than surveys, it explores issues in depth, and help to unravel how and why people frame their ideas in the manner that they do as well as how and why they make a linkage between values, ideas, opinions, and experiences, etc. Cohen et al., (2017, p. 506) added that interviews enable the participants (interviewers and interviewees) to discuss their interpretations of the world they live in and to express how they regard situations and phenomena from their point of view. They explained that an interview is “life in itself”, and not only concerned with collecting data about life. The semi-structured interview format was used with open-ended questions accompanied by follow-up (why or how) questions to solicit more information from the participants. Interviews have a huge response rate, giving room for the interviewer and interviewee to be immersed and involved and more difficult questions are handled well for better understanding (Oppenheim, 1992, p.81 as cited in Chen et al., 2017). A recorder was used to capture the interview session, which allowed the researchers to observe the respondent in the interview process, limit the chances of errors, and avoid distractions during the interview process. Respondent 1 has been granted two interview sessions. The first session was a relaxed interview session at the respondent's favorite library – Deichman Library at Bjorvika in Oslo. I shared pleasantries with him, and we sat down. Respondent 1 read the letter of information on the study and signed the consent form. The researcher asked questions in turns amidst follow-up questions and the second session was a walk along which commenced from the UiO campus in the main library through to Kirkeveien Street to Majorstruen and ended at Jernbanetorget. The first session of the interview of the second respondent took place at the UiO campus in the Helga Eng's Hus building. In a similar characteristic manner, the questions were asked in turns asking the respondent 2 questions coupled with follow-up questions for the respondent to expatiate on the responses given and give further clarifications on the answers provided.

### **3.3.6 Data Analysis**

I took a good listen to the three recorded audio files to fully acquaint myself with the discussions for the proper organization of the data. I then code the data based on recognizable themes, words,

phrases, and/or sentences realized from the transcripts, such as challenges, benefits, inclusion, professionalism, socialization, experiences, etc. This is supported by Srivastava and Hopwood (2009, p. 77) as they write that, themes, categories, and patterns do not come out of the blue but are driven by what the researcher wants to know and how he/she interprets what the data represents based on theoretical frameworks, subjective perspectives, ontological and epistemological stands, methodology and intuitive field of understandings making the procedure of data analysis highly reflexive. I manually executed the transcription and the analysis in that the participants were just 2 and I can easily listen to the audio files severally to make meaning out of the discussions. I played each file severally to acquaint myself with all three files and carefully transcribed the files accordingly. As Patton (1990) rightly put it, “The best advice I ever received about coding was to read the data I collected over and over again. The more I interacted with the data, the more patterns and categories began ‘to jump out’ at me” (p. 446). I played the audio recordings and transcribed both the questions and the answers and I used the open coding system where I wrote verbatim the responses from the respondents during the interview session. I thoroughly looked through the transcriptions, and all unintended omissions were corrected further. I further looked at the general data and came up with the themes, and word sentences, considering the theories and patterns I worked on in analysis. The focus was on the core elements of IE, the theory of symbolic interactionism, and in alignment with the purpose of the study and research questions.

### **3.3.7 Internal Validity and Reliability**

It is critical to achieve validity and reliability in a research project as this study strictly adhered to the tenets of them. Cohen et al., (2017) confirm that a research work is worthless if it does not adhere to the tenets of validity and validity. Reliability is essential and can be regarded as a fit between the data researchers record and what occurs in the natural setting that is being researched, thus, how accurate and comprehensive is the data gathering tool or mechanism (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992 as cited in Cohen et al., 2017). Reliability encompasses dependability, consistency, and replicability over time, over groups of respondents. Validity is not only about the extent to which an instrument measures what it intends or claims to measure, but the meaning and interpretation are sound (Ary et al., 2002, as cited in Cohen et al., 2017). To attain internal validity and achieve triangulation, the study intended to utilize multiple sources of data where

there will be interviews, mapping, masking, etc. Triangulation helps to strengthen the internal validity of a research project (Crowe et al., 2011).

Researchers partake in the activities of the world or are members of the world and cannot be completely objective about happenings in the world, so there is the need to tap into other people's perspectives which are valid as our own, and research is meant to uncover all. Validity is more concerned with the symbolic meanings participants give to the data and the appropriateness of the inferences drawn from the data (Cohen et al., 2017). This study is credible as it employs symbolic interactionism (SI) as the theory upon which this research work relies coupled with the use of qualitative methodology which permits multiple methods of inquiry and enables the respondents to freely and in a flexible manner share their experiences, interpretations, and perspectives on the phenomenon under study. The research design utilized, connecting the research questions to the research design, considering the context and purpose of the study, how appropriate the research design is in this study, the data collection tools utilized, and the data analysis tools and techniques all come together in making this research project trustworthy. Agar (1993) posits that the involvement of the researcher and the in-depth responses of the participants in qualitative interview data collection is sufficient ground to attain validity and reliability. This study is very credible, it made use of audio tape, cross-checking facts with the respondents, and the thick description of the research process. This research project actually paid attention to detail in making sure that observations made during the data collection process, coding of data, drawing of inferences, interpretations made from the data as well and reporting are accurately executed and properly recorded. To strengthen the quality of the research, the study draws on the theoretical framework that guides the study, crosschecking from the participants about the issues noted during the data collection process and the transparency of the researcher throughout the research process (Crowe et al., 2011).

### **3.3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Qualitative research has considerable potential to invade privacy. Privacy touches all aspects of the research enterprise: choice of topic, research design, foci, participants, instrumentation, questions asked, data and their collection, data analysis, reporting, and dissemination (Cohen et al., 2017). The Research Ethics Committee of the University of Oslo must approve the study

before I commence taking cognizance of the ethical measures put in place for the topic and throughout the study. The researcher also sought approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) – now called Sikt and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) - GDPR. The participants were recruited through publicity and invitations on the University of Oslo's social networks and online groups of students. Those interested contacted the researcher to partake in the study. Given the interest, the participants were reached out via text messages and calls with a brief explanation of the research objectives. Festinger and Katz (1966) consider that there is a real economy in going to the very top of the organization or system in question to obtain assent and cooperation. Bell (1991, p. 37) equally advises that, to gain permission early on, with fully informed consent, indicating to participants the possible benefits of the research. I made follow-up phone calls as a reminder to ascertain their readiness for the interview. I explained the details and significance of the study, the risks, and benefits associated with the study, and their rights to participate and withdraw at any point in time of the study. The methods for data collection and data storage were also explained to them. Cohen et al., (2017) rightly put it that it behooves the interviewer to detail the purpose, the scope, nature, and conduct of the interview, how data is to be handled and utilized, the duration of the interview, and the ethical issues of the interview. I ensured their anonymity, non-traceability, and confidentiality by making use of pseudonyms to represent the institutions and informants. I also ensured the safety of the devices used for the data collection to keep the data from getting into other hands.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The chapter deals with symbolic interactionism and the theory upon which this study is grounded. The tenets and methodology of this theory are fixed into the qualitative methodology and employed semi-structured interviews in gathering the data, how the data was analyzed, and ethical considerations of the study.

## **4.0 CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The study is to delve into the lived experiences of a double minority (LGBTQIA+ and migrant) student in an inclusive university environment. The study is guided by these research questions; what are the positive and negative experiences of a double minority student (LGBTIA+ and Migrant) in a university-inclusive environment? What is the clash between the expectation of cultural dynamics and the reality in the Norwegian school environment? What are the challenges faced by a double minority student on campus about acceptance and feeling of belonging and what is the way forward?

This chapter describes and reveals the results and findings from the data collection process. The results and findings are organized based on the concepts of Inclusion and non-inclusion, Borders, Hiatus, Masking, etc. The study focused on the lived experiences of two students from the University of Oslo who are both LGBTQIA+ persons and migrants. This chapter reveals their responses based on themes to issues bothering cultural dynamics, and inclusive activities in the university which involves issues of acceptability, the feeling of belonging, socialization, and the ability to make friends, associations, and integration issues (programs on campus), interests and memorable places or events or activities both in the school and the community/city, attitudes of teachers, classmates, and groups in the class, teamwork/cooperation, and issues bothering on discrimination/non-inclusiveness.

### **4.2 The Profiles of the Respondents in this Study**

The first participant is a male, gay, self-identified as mixed race. The second participant is of a mixed race, a white person with blond hair and blue eyes. He is a bisexual male.

### **4.3 Coding Process and Coding Headings**

The coding was done based on the concept of inclusive education, the respondents were anonymized by given pseudonyms as **Resp 1** and **Resp 2**.



### 4.3.1 Acceptability

One of the core elements of inclusion and inclusive education is for one to be well accepted no matter the background of a person. The respondents made statements that corroborate this concept. They espoused their views as;

#### Respondents

**Resp 1:** laughter, ... it's a nice thing to come to Norway as an LGBTQIA+ person because here you feel more secure, supported, and not discriminated against. Here (Norway) one can easily declare one's sexual identity and sexual orientation, people are more open here and have a liberal mind towards members of the LGBTQ+ community.

**Resp 2:** ...I think the students and young people, in general, are very accepting of that. It's like, I mean, I personally I don't for that possible identity on display to anybody, but I'm perfectly happy to be open with that if I'm chatting with somebody who seems nice and I'd really any negative interactions, ...

Again **Resp 2** made further claims in support of the above statements on the issue of acceptability in the city of Oslo and the university environment as well.

**Resp 2:** ... I like like the vibes I get is that Oslo is very welcoming place for LGBTQ individuals and that's nice that there's only you walk around the rainbow flag and stuff and it's. It seems very welcoming with regards to like xenophobia... I mean, students are young, as an international. There's a lot of information as well. There's a lot of diversity and that's cool and people are more accepting of others. In the rest of the city, it's more like around. There's less activity, of course, more students anymore. Umm. So, I think it's definitely easier, yeah than elsewhere in Oslo and...

**Resp 1** equally stated the issue of acceptability and non-judgment ability of the university environment and the community.

### 4.3.2 Feeling of Belongingness.

“Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work. Creating genuine feelings of belonging for all is a critical factor in improving engagement and performance. It also helps support business goals” (Cornell University web page on Diversity and Inclusion, 2023). The respondents explained this point as one area that is very important to them. A summary of a perspective shared on this is;

**Resp 2:** Yeah yeah yeah. I feel more connected to the department than any other kind of... Than than any other identity I have. My screen culture identity is the one that connects the most with people right now, I will say.

**Resp 1:** There is nothing quite different but here people are very open-minded, so they don't judge. People here are not judgmental, and they are nice to relate to here.

### 4.3.3 Socialization/Making Friends.

Human collectives are agents of socialization and for that matter, the university environment and the classroom dynamics play a major role in socialization which is an element of inclusion and inclusive education for all no matter their background, race, gender, sexual orientation, sexual expression, socioeconomic and socio-cultural settings, etc. According to the World Bank, Social inclusion is the right thing to do, and it also makes good economic sense. Left unaddressed, the exclusion of disadvantaged groups can be costly. At the individual level, the most commonly measured impacts include the loss of wages, lifetime earnings, poor education, and employment outcomes (Worldbank.org, 2023 accessed online <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion#>). The participants' responses on socialization and making friends in and out of the university.

**Resp 2:** ...I'm actually in Drammen so I commute like an hour and a half to Oslo everyday, one way. And when it comes to social circle making friends, then I've kind of found that the only real way to do that is if there's like a mutual interest, right? So my case, it's been through my program, through screen cultures. I've like met most people. Umm. So like made a few friends through that just going to class and chat with people. Umm. And then I wasn't really doing too much over the winter. But more recently I've been trying to go out and talk to people more and I've been like I've joined the MK University magazine. Well, and that's and that's...I guess another example of kind of mutual interest group, right where everybody is interested in writing that stuff and go to meetings and... Yeah, like I was at the first meeting for that yesterday in fact, and has had that meeting or chatting, you know, the usual sort of introductions.

Respondent 2 explained that it was much easier to make friends with people with similar characteristics on campus.

**Resp 2:** I found it a lot easier to make friends with international students because I kind of think they're in a similar situation to me where they're new here, you know, they've been here long and they're also trying to meet people and make friends. And that makes it easier I think.

The attitude of teachers and group members.

**Resp 1:** Socially, I have been doing quite well, I am socially ok, and I am financially ok. I came during the coronavirus era and there was no sitting in class at all, but I could realize that people from the same countries tend to be more together, especially those students from Iran but we the Turkish students it was just myself and it was easy for me to socialize for myself though I cannot talk on behalf of the other immigrant students but for me, it was quite easy for me to adapt and I have good friends from other countries.

#### 4.3.4 Cultural Shocks/Cultural Diversity

The participants explain their experiences with the cultural shocks and the diversity of culture on campus and in the community. Their responses are summarized below.

##### Respondents

**Resp 2:** Yeah, I mean, I would definitely say that people in the UK are more open. The like easier to to just casual conversation with them than Norwegians. Um, but big similarities with the with like the drinking culture, let's say. Yeah, I'm not sure because I think the... Polish is something that people are... I think it makes a difference that's in Norway that if you compare to the US which very multicultural immigrants, very welcomed, welcoming, people can feel proud of their background. I don't really feel that same thing in Norway so much. I think it's more kind of 'don't talk about it', kind of keep it hush' and I guess the way that's going on this to me is that I don't like...

**Resp 1:** Not really, it wasn't necessary to change behavior for this adaptation. It is just that |I wanted to. I know people who have stayed here (Norway) longer than I who cannot speak the language because they see themselves as outsiders, but truth be told I don't see myself as an outsider. I just wanted and it is fun to see yourself as part of this culture (Norwegian culture). Learning the language is very beneficial, it provides a lot of opportunities. Initially, I had culture shock, but I gradually evolved into loving it.

#### 4.3.5 Teamwork and Understanding

Inclusion brings about tolerance and creates an enabling environment for teamwork to thrive. A summary of the participant's perspective on this is stated below. Cooperative learning promotes tolerance among students and has the potential to connect students' cognitive and affective development (Vogt, P.V., 1997).

##### Respondents

**Resp 2:** Group work, that's always going to be that they choose the groups randomly. Which is I think that's the best way of doing it, you know. I mean, you don't want to force any click. So, you were talking to people they haven't spoken with much before, and that's always, always cool. I don't know, this is a different experience to being in the US, but I'm like, not my first time being an international student. This is my fifth year of it. So like I've already gotten used to the whole thing.

**Resp 1:** Yeah, all of the students in my group were non-white Norwegians ones, if I had to categorize it, everyone's work were appreciated. There was three on the groups, and other three times it had to be a group of three, and that's it never ever group work again.

### 4.3.6 Associations and Integration and Programs on Campus

The University and the Student Organization put up programs activities and associations to connect students and enhance friendships among students. This goes a long way to foster cohesion among students of all races, genders, cultural differences, etc. Higher education institutions need to create events and activities that are inclusive to all students (Iwara et al., 2017). The activities and programs on campus comprise sports and social events that make it possible for all students no matter their backgrounds and identities to share their experiences together (Caldwell & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2016). A summary of the responses of the participants is as follows.

#### Respondents

**Resp 1:** Not really, I'm just quite chilly, I'm spontaneous. I don't really belong to any association even the Muslim association I couldn't join because I'm not religious, but I simply do not want to belong to any of such groupings/associations. Not really, I am either sitting/studying here (Deichman Library @ Bjorvika) or working. I do not really have more time to participate in social organization/activities but there is quite a lot. I have been in ... quite often but I do not have enough time to participate in social activities or organizations.

**Resp 2:** Umm. I've... Hmm. Maybe they were like some events happening right at the beginning and I see and there's some like international student organizations and such. Umm. For me at least though pretty much every kind of like event I've been to has been through my master's program, and in that case, it's more either organized by students or students in the program, I will like post events that are happening on Facebook. And that's nice as well because I know that if I go there, there's gonna be at least one or two people that I know that I can easily make conversation with. So, it's you know, it's always like a little bit hard not writing to go to an event just on your own and make friends there. But it's so, so it's nice that the people in the program do like post about every time. And umm, I went to one yesterday, today, uh, I went on one on Tuesday, yesterday I went to the magazine meeting. And then today there's like another AMK, meeting communication happening. I'm gonna go to it and it's. Uh, and and it's that kind of I guess social situations that are nice to be involved with. So, I've not really felt much need recently to try and seek out international student particular ones as well, because the screen culture program is very international. I'm fine.

### 4.3.7 The Attitude of Teachers and Classmates

The attitude of the teachers, the administrative staff, and classmates in the school goes a long way to promote an inclusive environment for all students.

## Respondents

**Resp 1:** They should be more concerned about the people who came from different countries because it has been so stressful for us to study, and the teachers are so strict on us students from other countries, and it was also double stress because of the coronavirus pandemic period. I wish it were better if they (Teachers) were more considerate towards us (Immigrant students). There is no difference (in treatment) between the locals and the immigrant students. But in general, they could be more flexible about the deadlines. They (Authorities/Teachers) cannot really discriminate against immigrants from the locals so we should all be treated equally with equal rights in the university.

**Resp 2:** Yeah, I I think the lecturers in that case it's about the individual and the individual lectures I've had so far have been great. They don't say anything that makes anyone uncomfortable that would be welcoming. They are perfectly welcoming. And at least this semester, there's been no reason to talk about any. To talk about like a minority or topics at all. Um, last semester it was in the we talked about a bit and the sort of the way the conversations go feels pretty similar to how it was when I was in America. When I was studying on an extremely left-leaning liberal college campus...

### 4.3.8 Borders

Human collectives mediate their experiences by creating borders (Marsico & Tateo, 2021). Humans develop tools to make their daily lives more meaningful. Borders are considered tools created and established by human collectives in dealing with interpsychic activities (Marsico & Tateo, 2021). The psychic life is a process of purposeful production and interpretation of signs through the cycles of selective and culturally guided internalization and externalization (Valsiner, 2014 as cited in Marsico & Tateo, 2021). Similarly, the existence of borders is regarded significant due to their meaningfulness to someone (Marsico & Tateo, 2021). Marsico et al., (2013) espoused that borders can be in various forms, thus, physical world (e.g., a coast separating land and sea) or created as result of physical-psychological interactions (e. g., a fence or gate separating one's private home from the public) or created psychologically (e. g., social norms, cultural norms). Borders in the sense transcend the physical walls/fences in that some borders are invisible and are brought about through cultural, interpersonal, and socialization. In this study, the borders are utilized in the coding process to understand the respondents' views, the signs and meanings they create, the symbolic borders drawn on the concept of inclusion, and how they perceive the university environment. The usage of borders is in line with the tenets of the symbolic interactionism paradigm. Valsiner (2007) espoused that, ... our development

history, interactions, language and culture lead to the establishment of boundaries of experiences and creation of meaning in the world we found ourselves.

### *The ambivalence of belonging and not belonging*

The summary of the results revealed that the students at some point found themselves in a state of confusion about whether they truly felt belonged or not in the university/classroom. This is the border of immigrant, Norwegian, and cultural border.

### **Respondents**

**Resp 1:** They are nice people; they can treat you as friends (in the classroom/school) but not real friends, that much is impossible. Being good friends is so hard, so difficult otherwise. ...I feel really part of it.

He stated further,

**Resp 1:** People are quite nice here, but people are more kind in my home country than here, to be honest.

Borders at school and work

Respondent 1 talked about boundaries at school and work. He stated that,

They really know how to separate their work and school from their daily lives. They don't act outside their work or school as they do during the work or school sessions which includes not responding to your messages sometimes (laughs).

## **4.4 Comparing Findings to the Theoretical Framework of the Study.**

This research project is guided by a symbolic interactionism paradigm which stipulates that the actions of people are primarily due to the daily activities they engage in and how they interpret the social activities (Blumer, 1962). Human collectives are socially active, as one interacts with his/her environment, certain symbols, and experiences are formed and these culminate into one's perspectives. Malesevic (2004) stated that humanity forms a set of symbols as they interact with their environment and make meanings either as an individual or as a group interpretation of social conditions. This study's core mandate is to delve into the vivid experiences of a double minority student concerning inclusion in the university community. The students/respondents in this study have their perspectives, and interpretations on inclusion and inclusive education based on what they experience in the classroom, the cultural differences in the school climate, and their

social networks in the university. The theory, SI is perfectly fit for purpose in that it has helped to dig deeper into understanding inclusion and inclusive practices through the eyes of the double minority students. Based on the data collected, the theory is apt in looking into the experiences of the respondents in the university environment. The response from the respondents clearly shows their perceptions, interpretations, attitudes, the kind of school climate they experience, their frustrations, and their interests on issues of inclusion. The above statements corroborated what Blumer stated, that psychological terms such as attitudes, motivation, perceptions, cognitions, and experiences coupled with roles, cultural norms, and social pressure all come into play in creating meaning out of social interactions (Fink, 2015).

## **4.5 Conclusion**

The chapter demonstrated the results and findings of the data collection process. The core issues raised and the corresponding responses from the respondents were presented in this chapter. The experiences, perceptions, and challenges of the respondents encountered in a perceived inclusive environment were highlighted. The respondents detailed their experiences of acceptability, the feeling of belonging, the kind of socialization that exists in the university community, and the classroom dynamics, they enumerated their experiences on the cultural differences they encountered in the university. The chapter equally showcased the respondents' views on the teachers and classmates as well as the invisible borders in the university environment.

## **5.0 CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter looked at the discussions and conclusions made from the data and findings presented in the previous chapter. The study delved into the vivid experiences of a double minority student in the university community. The concept and experiences of inclusion are explained through the eyes of the respondents. The analysis of the data collected through the quantitative semi-structured interviews revealed the respondents' challenge of ambivalence, experiences of inclusion in the form of access, acceptability, socialization, the feeling of belonging, the way and manner they meander the invisible borders, and the masking techniques they employed.

### **5.2 The Theoretical and Methodological Framework of the Study**

The study hinges on symbolic interactionism and employs qualitative methodology in revealing the vivid experiences of a double minority student in the university, where the focus is on inclusion and inclusive activities in the university. The symbolic interactionism paradigm is concerned with the interpretations humans give to situations as they engage in their daily activities (Blumer, 1962). The students in this study interact with the school environment, teachers, colleagues, schoolmates, and classmates and engage in other social activities that influence their perceptions of the concept of inclusion. Based on the experiences of the double minority students from their home country and what they come to experience in Norway goes a long way to cause them to have behavioral changes, build values for themselves, and give them a different approach to life conditions. I adopted the SI paradigm and qualitative methodology which utilizes interviews to enable me to have ample space and flexibility to interact with the respondents in their comfort zone and tap into their lived experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of inclusion in the university environment.

### **5.3 Discussions of the Findings**

The findings from the data analyzed revealed some interesting responses from the respondents concerning inclusion and what is very important to them. The study is about a case study of inclusion being experienced by a double minority student which was guided by these research



questions. What are the experiences of a double minority student (LGBTQA+ and an immigrant) in the university environment? What is the clash between the expectations of cultural dynamics and the reality in the Norwegian university community? And what are the challenges faced by a double minority student on campus about acceptance and feeling of belonging and what are the way forward? The discussions are themed on what was deduced from the data in line with the research questions on inclusion in areas of how the respondents feel accepted and whether there is any hindrance to access. As UNESCO (1994) rightly stated no child or student is to be denied access to the promise of education based on their gender, socioeconomic background, cultural background, religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, and expression, etc. the discussions also focused on the respondents feeling of belonging and socialization mechanisms available for them to settle in the university. There are equally highlights on the cultural dynamics they experienced, how they perceive and participate in the University's programs and activities, and how that has helped them in the inclusion agenda by the university and the Norwegian government agenda on inclusion. Finally issues on the challenge of ambivalence and how they mask the invisible borders in the university.

### **5.3.1 Findings on Access and Acceptability**

The data considered based on the responses from the respondents revealed that the university is open to all, and they feel accepted as double minority students (LGBTQA+ and immigrant). They feel more supported and not discriminated against. The above revelation corroborates the literature and the policy of inclusion and inclusive education agenda of the government of Norway and the University of Oslo where the respondents find themselves. Johnsen (2016) explains that IE... involves strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision to provide all students with an equitable and participatory learning experience. UiO's policy and action plan stipulates that UiO will be an open and inclusive university..., A response from the respondent stated, ... *it's actually a nice thing to come to Norway..., because here you feel more secure and supported and not discriminated against.* Again, this finding is in line with Hehir Grindal et al., (2016) that inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures, and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision to provide all students of relevant age with an equitable and

participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences (p.3).

### **5.3.2 The Feeling of Belonging and Socialization.**

One of the crucial elements of the concept of inclusion is in the areas of feeling of belonging and the ability to socially connect with people. Chinyamurindi (2018) confirms that students perform and thrive academically if they feel a sense of belonging, an element of inclusion. The analysis of the results shows that the students feel much belong. The sense of acceptance as explained by the respondents above demonstrates their feeling of belonging. This is in line with the literature, that creating genuine feelings of belonging for all is a critical factor in improving engagement and performance (Cornell University on Diversity and Inclusion, 2023). Also, Johnson (2008) confirms that minority students' feeling of belonging goes a long way in measuring the degree of inclusion or exclusion. There is a revelation that as a double minority student in as much as they belonged, it is much easier to create social connections with students of the same interests, and background, students in similar situations like being an international student. The Worldbank.org (2023) espoused the usefulness of social inclusion, ... it makes good economic sense. The double minority students in this study desire, as noted from the data, to be more connected socially to the majority group in the university environment and the classrooms but that never existed, or they never got that leverage to do so. The data also shows that there is a cordial relationship between the teachers and the classmates, but the respondents are not able to strike that deep or strong connection, especially with the locals. This is corroborated by literature as Jackson (2016) posits that social integration in the university goes beyond having positive exchanges, it equally requires teachers, classmates, and course mates to share similar characteristics like culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, and sexual expression for students to create a community of like-mindedness. There is also teamwork in the classrooms during group work. Respondent 2 stated I found it a lot easier to make friends with international students, ... and Respondent 1 also said, ... *I realized that people from the same countries tend to be more together*. In as much as the double minority students in this study feel accepted and have a sense of feeling of belonging, their social connections were limited to people with similar characteristics. This is in line with the literature,

### 5.3.3 Cultural Dynamics and Adaptation Ability

Another key area the research question tends to delve into is the cultural expectations and shock of the respondents from what they experienced in the university environment. This cultural shock the respondents had has adverse effect on their ability to mingle and participate fully in the host culture. Respondent 2 stated emphatically that, *... people in the UK where he spent the majority of his formation years are more open, like easier to just strike up a casual conversation unlike in Norway and the university community. Respondent 1 also said that initially, I had cultural shock, but I gradually evolved into loving it.* The data showed that the respondents were amazed by the cultural dynamics of the majority group in the university and the community they reside in as compared to their home country's culture. Literature affirms this challenge, issues of characteristics of people, cultural dynamics, and contexts affect implementation (Caspersen et al., 2020). This shock or amazement is a result of the fact that they have come to experience an unfamiliar way of life. This revelation from the data corroborates the literature as moving to a new or unfamiliar culture results in culture shock (UKCOSA, 2007; Zhou et al., 2008). Analyzing the data collected, there is the desire of the respondents to adjust to the culture of the majority group or the host culture. Respondent 1 confirms or sees himself as a Norwegian because he feels he possesses some aspect of his life that conforms to the way of life of the culture of the majority group or the locals. He stated that *'...truth be told I don't see myself as an outsider. I just wanted and it is fun to see yourself as part of this culture (Norwegian culture)'*. This is in line with the literature, that international students had to adjust to an unfamiliar culture, education, economy, family, government, and society which is immediate and not gradual socialization unlike the locals of the host culture have experienced over the years (Brown, 2008; Sovic, 2008). In as much as the respondents had a culture shock as they encountered the majority culture, they tried to build tolerance and acceptance of the way of life. Sobkowiak (2019) posits that over the years students demonstrate more tolerance and acceptance toward cultural differences through positive engagements and interactions with the locals. This can be a cumbersome task though.

Language being of the elements of culture, could also hinder an individual from being immersed and participating fully in the unfamiliar culture. The data showed that for the respondents to quickly adjust, interact, and feel fully accepted as an immigrant into the culture, language acquisition must be the way. Respondent 1 stated his reason for quickly learning the Norwegian

language. He stated that *learning the language is very beneficial, it provides a lot of opportunities*. This is in line with the literature, as Cao et al., (2017) confirm that having skills in the host language helps international (immigrant) students' social connections which in the long run increases the feeling of belonging to the majority group or the locals (Wilson et al., 2020). Again, Wang (2021) stated that international students, one way for to improve cross-cultural competence is for them to gain cultural knowledge through the learning and acquisition of the language of the host culture and learn both the culture and the language more effectively since the two are inseparable.

### **5.3.4 Participation in School Programs and Activities**

Scorgie and Forson (2019) reported that an inclusive school environment creates an opportunity for all students to have access to and participate in quality and equitable education, ... so they become responsible and contributory global citizens. The University of Oslo puts programs and activities in place to help students settle in and cooperate for academic and social engagement. The respondents stated clearly that they are aware of such programs and activities such as the buddy week celebrations at the beginning of each semester, the language café, free language classes for international students, and other various departmental activities which are aimed at helping the students to socialize, have full participation, and build cohesion among the student body. This corroborates the literature, as Iwara et al., (2017) stated that universities established programs with the sole aim of improving social cohesion and integration of students from diverse cultures, and the activities and programs on campus comprised of sports and social events which, makes it possible for all students no matter their backgrounds or identities to share their experiences together. Again, students' participation in extracurricular activities, clubs, affiliations, societies, associations, and social groups has positive effects on students (Astin, 1999). Judging from the data analyzed, the double minority students do not fully indulge themselves in most of such programs and activities. This is partly because there were issues of the coronavirus restrictions and the juggling of school and work. There was not enough time for them to participate in most of the activities in the university. One of the respondents said *I don't really belong to any association, even the Muslim association, ... I am either studying or working. I do not really have more time to participate in social organization or social activities but there is quite a lot of activities and programs as well as associations on campus*. This

realization is in line with literature as Astin (1999) explained that different students have different motivations, inspirations and interest in what to engage in. In this case, the respondents do not benefit from group activities espoused by literature, Van Dyke et al., (1995) stated that group activities in an inclusive environment help students to understand each other and develop a sense of understanding and respect for each other.

### **5.3.5 The Challenges of Ambivalence, the Experience of Crossing Invisible Borders, and the Tactics of Masking.**

The data analyzed to reveal the ambivalence in which the respondents find themselves, how they maneuver the inviable borders, and the usage of masking in the quest to surmount the challenges faced. Respondent 1 especially lives in the ambivalence of belonging and not belonging to the way of life and the culture of the majority group (Norwegian culture). At one point he stated that he was okay with everything and going along with things (culture) on and off campus but during the walk-along discussion he stated a divergent view and expressed the feeling of how tough it is to have social bonds with the majority group. This revelation was captured by literature as if students feel they matter in their departments, classrooms, or universities they become more involved, determined, committed, and persist to graduate and excel academically (Schieferecke and Card, 2013). Again, Han et al., (2018) reported that minority students who do not feel welcomed, supported, and encouraged have a tough time adjusting and being successful in pursuit of academic emancipation. To quickly adapt and cross the borders/boundaries, the learning and acquisition of the Norwegian language was the way forward. Language acquisition helps in the crossing of new borders, and having access to new spaces, thus, physical and symbolic borders. Respondent 1 stated that... in as much as respondent one describes and sees himself as a Norwegian, he encounters the challenge of establishing social connections with the majority group, this goes to explain that he is seen or identified differently even though he identifies as a Norwegian based on the way he lives his life. The data showed that there is a constant negotiation of belief of himself and others as well as cultural meanings, but the social bonds have been established already and there is no room for further expansion.

There is a realization that one part of the minority background of the respondents in this study creates room for better access, acceptability, and participation from the other. A confession from

the respondent alludes, *“Like I said earlier, it will be more impossible to be friends with Norwegians, and it’s actually a nice thing to come to Norway as an LGBTQ person because here you feel more secure, supported, and not discriminated against. Here (Norway) anyone can easily declare one’s sexual identity and sexual orientation, people are more open here and have a liberal mind towards the members of the LGBTQ community”*. The queerness of the respondents has a higher acceptance rate in Norway as compared to their country of origin, but the immigrant part is where the challenge is since they are identified easily as immigrants. The above revelation from the data is contrary to the literature, research conducted on migrants revealed that migrants who are queer are subjects of discrimination and stereotyping on issues of sexual orientation and gender, the background of the migrants, and, some double minority persons contemplated suicidal thoughts, about 22% of respondents attempted suicide due to the feeling of alienation (Eggebo et al., 2018). Again, the respondent stated, *“Like there are Norwegian gay people, ..., I think it’s kind of hard to integrate, ... particularly I would say more when it comes to the immigrant backgrounds, I think personally already notice that seems very welcoming to LGBTQ and not quite so to the immigrants so much”*. Again, the above deviate from the literature, Chatterjee, (2014) reported that in certain jurisdictions, homosexuality is illegal and punishable by fines, imprisonment, and the death penalty. LGBTQI students undergo psychological distress which leads to low self-esteem, and lack of self-acceptance which could result in delayed identity development and suicidal thoughts (Oliver, 2016).

Another way to quickly bypass the borders, respondent 2 possessed certain traits that helped him to disguise his identity due to his mixed-race characteristics, possessing blonde hair and blue eyes he can easily blend as a Norwegian but the fact of being a double minority creates a strong borders and challenges that needs to be crossed. He stated, *“So in my case, I identify as bisexual and it’s just because I think it’s like, a kind of link to be drawn between my sexuality and then, I mean I look Norwegian, it’s really convenient like I mean I do have these like double minority backgrounds but it’s easy to hide. Like it’s not something I need to tell people if I don’t want to”*. In this case, for the expectation and experience of being included, the desire to camouflage one’s identity. The masking was used to suppress the less prestigious nationality leading to a more fluid and permitting one to navigate other social groups, play roles, avoid discrimination and rejection, and catalyst social interactions. As a double minority, being identified as an immigrant is quite unpleasant and depressing than being identified as an LGBTQ in the university and the

larger society as experienced by the respondents. The way the respondents have challenges of being immigrant is in line with literature, research conducted in Italy on students by Alesina et al., (2018) revealed that teachers “generally hold strong negative stereotypes towards immigrant students” (p. 3). OECD (2014) stated that migrants face more difficulties finding employment compared to their native peers.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The experiences as captured and shared by the respondents through the qualitative interview and the walk-along discussion. The deductions from the speeches of respondent 1 are that he constantly desires to adapt quickly and maneuver the symbolic borders and quickly learn and acquisition of the language of the majority group (Norwegian language) and with the belief of being part and parcel of the culture. Respondent 2 has the flexibility of choosing to exhibit himself in different social settings in the university and the larger community.

The deductions drawn are that depending on the kind of borders one crosses or the one who crosses creates an ambivalence between social representation of meanings among the majority group. The respondents in this study’s experiences intersect as they both encounter the hindrance of being able to solidify a strong social bonding/connection with the majority group. In the quest to surmount the challenges of social connection with the majority group which can be realized is one of their major concerns, there is the availability to connect with students with similar characteristics or in similar situations, thus, the blend with other international students or students from other minority backgrounds with diverse cultures. This is vital in enhancing the inclusion agenda in that inclusion comes in various forms which doesn’t only have to be with the majority group (Norwegians).

The University of Oslo (UiO) has numerous policies, programs, and activities aimed at promoting social cohesion, inclusion among students, and acceptance of diversity which are in line with the inclusion agenda of the government of Norway. The participants in sharing their lived experiences confirm that the university environment is very open and accepts all persons no matter their race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation and expression, socioeconomic status, or religious and cultural backgrounds. The respondents in this study could not fully be immersed and participate in the programs and activities put in place to promote socialization and inclusion

due to time factors as they must share their limited time between studies and jobs to earn income to sort their economic burdens. As literature have severally exposed the difficulties double minority students faces in universities especially the LGBTQA+ portion, in Norway and the University of Oslo the story is different, they rather felt loved, welcomed, supported, accepted and have freedom to everything. The other part of the double minority is where the students/respondents stated they felt different even with that there is no overt discrimination but due to cultural differences they felt not really welcomed or accepted. Museus et al., (2018) concludes that comparably, minority students report of lower sense/feeling of belonging to their majority counterparts/white peers.

It has been realized that the social environment an individual finds him/herself has a greater effect on their experiences, perceptions, interpretations and the way one behaves, in this sense socialization enables individuals to learn basic skills, values and be able to emulate the behavior patterns of the group one aspires or desires to join or interact with.

## **5.5 Recommendation for the University**

The University of Oslo has put in place policies for diversity and inclusion and a lot of programs and activities in the quest to make the academic environment more inclusive. Notwithstanding, having enough of these activities and programs, it behooves the university authorities to find out the policies, programs and activities are serving their purpose and the staff, and the students are really benefiting from them. I recommend that the university perform periodic checks to see if the policies, programs and activities enacted are really working as desired by the farmers. I believe if these programs and activities go well, it will help the domestic students or the majority group. Anoushirvani & Golagdaie (2019) posit that diversity in the university is very beneficial to the domestic students in that it increases cultural awareness and helps them achieve cultural competency. Possibly there could also be a creation of multicultural environment to celebrate the history and culture of all the different races, minorities, ethnic groups, and populations on campus (Cheng, 2004).



## **5.6 Recommendations for Further Studies**

This study relied on symbolic interactionism and using qualitative methodology to unravel the lived experiences of the respondents. The study explores inclusion through the eyes of two minority students in the University of Oslo. A similar research design could be employed where multiple sources of data collection be used like mapping, walk-along discussion, photo-voice and using the same theoretical framework, method to achieve triangulation and to broaden the knowledge and analysis on inclusion in the university environment concerning double minority students.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Interview Guide

# **Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Inclusion Through the eyes of two (2) double minority students at the University of Oslo**



Master's Thesis

**Wilson Mensah Amuzu**

Department of Special Needs Education  
Faculty of Educational Sciences  
University of Oslo

This interview guide is prepared to Tapping into the vivid experiences, perceptions and interpretations of two double minority students (LGBTQA+ and Immigrant) concerning inclusion at the University of Oslo. You have been purposefully selected to be part of the sample. The study is purely for academic purposes and the information obtained will be treated with the highest degree of confidentiality.

Your response to each of the following questions means you have duly consented to participate in the research.

## **SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

1. What do you study at the university?
2. Your ethnicity?
3. What is your gender identification?
4. What is your sexuality?
5. What is your age?

### **Experiences**

6. What is your experience in the university, socialization, studies, etc.?
7. Do you participate in any activity, group, student association, or extra classes? If yes, which ones? Why did you decide to participate in these activities?
8. What troubles have you identified in the university? Or what challenges have you encountered in the university community?
9. How is the classroom setting like? Do you feel belonging in the classroom?
10. How has the experience of being an LGBTQ person in Norway as well as the university been like for you, what is the experience like for you?
11. Do you remember your first day here at the University? Describe the situation?

### **Inclusion**

12. How do you feel when you are at the university? Explain your experience on your feelings of acceptability and belongingness.
13. Can you describe a situation, event, or happenings at the university that was striking/meaningful for you?



14. What are group assignments like at the university or in the classroom?
15. Are you able to break into their circles in the classroom and the school environment?  
Share your experiences or perceptions?
16. What about the Norwegian students who are not LGBTQ persons, are you able to mingle with them in the classroom and the university environment?
17. Kindly share your experiences as an immigrant in the university or in the classroom.

### **Cultural dynamics**

18. What are the things here in Norway that are different from your country?
19. How different is the culture and what are the similarities between the culture of your home country and the host country's culture.
20. Do you feel like being part of the Norwegian culture? Kindly tell your feeling of being part of the host culture.

### **Norway and University of Oslo**

21. Have you come here all by yourself? What was the process like for you?
22. Share with me why you chose Norway and University of Oslo as your study destination.

## **Appendix 2: Letter of Participation and Consent Form**

### **Letter of Participation and Concern Form**

**Are you interested in taking part in the research project,**

**“Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Inclusion Through the eyes of two (2) double minority students at the University of Oslo”**

#### **Purpose of the project**

##### **Purpose or significance of the study**

The study will unravel the university inclusive environment's condition to the life, social experiences/connections, and academic progress of a double minority student, thus a migrant from a minority group and an LGBTQIA+ student. The study will further add to the knowledge base on issues concerning inclusion and inclusive education in a different form (i.e., LGBTQIA+) instead of the usual inclusive education of students with educational needs, thus, physical, psychological, learning disorders, disorders, etc.). Hodkinson (2011) espoused that, there is much concentration of IE on children with SEN, but IE be more concerned with children with SEN, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender issues, age, culture, race, socio-economic status, etc. Finally, the outcome of this research paper will serve as a reference point for policymakers, governments, think tanks, and stakeholders in education to strategize activities and programs to cater to all levels of the educational spectrum in Ghana and the world.

#### **Research questions**

Does belonging to minority groups (LGBTIA+ and immigrants) mediate the processes that unfold in multiple spheres of life – University, work, circle of friends, neighborhood?

##### **Specific research questions**

4. What are the positive and negative experiences of a double minority student (LGBTIA+ and Migrant) in the university inclusive environment?
5. What is the clash between the expectation of cultural dynamics and the reality in the Norwegian school environment?

6. Is inclusion a reality or an illusion or a paper desire?

**Who is responsible for the research project?**

The **UNIVERSITY OF OSLO** is the institution responsible for the project.

**Why are you being asked to participate?**

The theme of the study demands that I look out for someone with the requisite knowledge and authentic experience in the area of a double minority (LGBTQIA+ and Migrant). In this regard, I desire to employ a purposeful sampling method in the selection of informants. The intention of the research is not for generalization but to dig deep into the lived experiences of a student in the university who is a double minority.

**What does participation involve for you?**

The study will employ the semi-structured interview to solicit in-depth information from the participant on the participant's lived experiences of a double minority in the university. The interview will be recorded amidst the writing of some points on paper. It will take approximately 60 minutes for the interview session.

**Participation**

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

**Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data.**

I will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

The one to access the personal data on behalf of the institution is my supervisor (GIUSEPPINA MARSICO, Associate Professor, Ph.D.) and myself. I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of words, contact details, and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data. The collected data will be treated in a manner to ensure the

confidentiality, anonymity, and non-traceability of the informants. I will store the data on an encrypted disc.

### **What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?**

The project is scheduled to end on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023. I will destroy the audio recording and the transcribed data.

### **Your rights**

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you.
- request that your personal data be deleted.
- request that incorrect personal data about you be corrected/rectified.
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and

send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

### **What gives us the right to process your personal data?**

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the **UNIVERSITY OF OSLO**, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

### **Where can I find out more?**

If you have questions about the project or want to exercise your rights, contact:

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO via GIUSEPPINA MARSICO, Associate professor, Ph.D.

Supervisor

Associate professor, PhD

**GIUSEPPINA MARSICO**

gmarsico@unisa.it

Associate Professor of Developmental and Educational Psychology, University of Salerno, (Italy)

President-Elect of Division 52 International Psychology of the APA-American Psychological Association

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Department of Special Needs Education  
Faculty of Educational Sciences  
University of Oslo

Our Data Protection Officer: *[insert name of the data protection officer at the institution responsible for the project]*

- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: ([personvertjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personvertjenester@nsd.no)) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader  
(Giuseppina Marsico)

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### Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project **Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Inclusion Through the eyes of a double minority student** and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an *interview*.
- for my personal data to be processed in Norway.*

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023.

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(Signed by participant, date)