

# **Adaptation, Gender and Cultural Perspectives**

The Role of Formal and Informal Education in language learning, the adaptation processes and self development of African women living in Oslo Norway: Bridging the gap between past and new experiences of acquired knowledge

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## Abstract

When crossing borders to foreign lands in Europe to look for opportunities of bettering their lives, African women often carry with them a vivid awareness and after taste of their history of subordination by their colonizers during the period of colonization as well as an awareness of the subordination by men, which is part of their cultural heritage from their countries which favor patriarchy.

The aim of this study was to examine how these women adapt and learn through self development in the new culture which is different from their own. By sharing their experiences of acquiring knowledge in formal and informal settings in the original and the new host culture through in-depth interviews, it is hoped that the women brought an awareness and understanding to the host culture as well as a degree of self awareness and self appreciation as they come into terms with the events of their past which shaped them to be who they are, whilst they negotiate the present to prepare for a better future through self development.

To analyze the data and to understand the different perspectives of the participants as well as to explain the different strategies which the participants employed whilst adapting to the Norwegian society alongside literature review, the following theories were used, the constructivist epistemology, discourse analysis, the theory of transformative learning and the standpoint feminist theory.

The sample of this qualitative case study was made up of ten participants from eight Anglophone African countries and two teachers from the Norwegian Language School. The study revealed that through socialization by enculturation and acculturation in the home and the school, the women learnt how to be vocal in informal settings and silent in formal settings. By moving to the new culture the women had to learn to find their voice and break that silence. They also learnt to break the pattern of subordination brought about by colonization and patriarchy to struggle for a position as well as recognition in the new culture, which misconstrues the discourse of silence as lack of knowledge. The findings revealed that the silence and the reluctance to express themselves especially in formal settings has cultural interpretations and originated from their early socialization. Silence is regarded as a way of showing respect for authorities; it does not necessarily mean that the women are unknowledgeable.

The study also showed that the women employed different strategies in adjusting to the constructivist approach to acquiring knowledge in formal settings, as well as certain strategies to adapt to their new situation in a culture that is very different from their own. Whilst the women experienced constructivism only in the informal settings in their countries of origin it became a disorienting phenomenon when they had to learn to adjust to this approach of knowledge acquisition in the formal setting, which they found in the Norwegian education system as opposed to what they had been socialized to in their countries. The findings revealed that most of the women are still frustrated by the failed efforts in their endeavors to try and get satisfying employment which they feel they deserve due to their academic

achievements. This phenomenon present in the labor market is a hindrance to the successful adaptation of the African women.

Another important finding in this study is the strategies that the women employed to negotiate gender roles, which they faced in the new culture that were different from what they were used to in their original cultures. Whilst the egalitarian structures in Norway placed the women in the same footing as men, the women in this study remained aware that they had to incorporate their culture and find the balance between the two cultures which have opposing values.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to two beautiful ladies who gave me so much joy and enriched my life in a special way, who I miss dearly. One gone too soon at age twelve my daughter Portia Bhehane and one blessed with a long life and departed at age 91, my mother Martha Bhehane. RIP both of you. This work is also dedicated to all the African women in the Diaspora. I say to you all keep up the spirit!

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To the participants of this research project, who worked with me, parting with their confidential information and precious time, whose lives this thesis is about, as we walk the road to self rediscovery together: to you ladies I say it would not have been possible without you: heartfelt thanks to all of you for your patience and impartiality, I could not have done it without your cooperation. I say to you all march forward!

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Above all I thank God for sound health and sound mind to be able to finish this project.

## **Declaration**

I declare that, "Adaptation, Gender and Cultural Perspectives: The Role of Formal and Informal Education in language learning, the adaptation processes and self development of African women Living in Oslo Norway: Bridging the gap between past and new experiences of acquired knowledge" is my own work which has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to this university or any other institution. All the sources that I have used and quoted from have been acknowledged as a complete reference.

**Marvis Bhehane Bordvik**

**Date 27 April, 2010**

## List of Abbreviations

IMDI	Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet
CARLA	Centre for Advanced Research in Language Acquisition
GCIR	Grant Makers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees
PPF	Public Policy Forum
EU	European Union
EEA	European Economic Area
SSB	Statistisk sentralbyrå

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# **Chapter One**

## **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the immigrant situation in Norway in general, as well as the challenges that are faced by immigrant women coming from Africa in their adaptation to the new culture. This chapter covers the statement of the problem, the aim of the study, research objectives and questions.

## **1.1 Background to the study**

Norway like many countries in Europe has had her share of immigrants from different countries. Statistisk sentralbyrå (1998), observes that between 1971 and 1993, 56 900 individuals migrated to Norway as refugees or for family reunion reasons and that by the beginning of 1996, 90 % of them were still living in Norway. The term immigrant population here refers to persons with two foreign-born parents, or more precisely, persons who have neither parents nor grandparents that were born in Norway (SSB, 2007). According to Statistics Norway (2004), the immigrant population can be divided into two groups, namely first generation immigrants being those persons born abroad with two foreign born parents and descendants being those persons born in Norway of two foreign-born parents.

At the beginning of 2007, the immigrant population accounted for 9 per cent of the population in Norway where 208 000 were women and 206 000 were men. According to Statistisk sentralbyrå (2008), at the beginning of 2008, immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents constituted of about 460 000 persons or 9, 7% of the population of Norway and by January 2009 the whole immigrant population was at 10, 6 %. This indicates a rise in the number of immigrants and their descendants from the previous years.

According to the Norway statistics (2007), most immigrants are concentrated mostly in urban areas like Oslo where 25% of the population are immigrants followed by Bergen with 17 %. Statistics Sentralbyrå Norway also suggests that one out of four immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrants parents in Oslo are from countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America Oceania excluding Australia, New Zealand and Europe excluding the EU/EEA (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2008). People have immigrated to Norway for various reasons for example political reasons,

asylum seekers, refugees, guest workers and those who come to Norway as international students and for different reasons eventually decide to stay.

Norwegian Statistics also show that among these immigrants, those coming from African countries make up a substantial group with 61 000 individuals living in Norway as a whole having an African background. The percentage of female immigrants in Norway is almost equal to that of men with a difference in percentage of 2% with men at 51% and women at 49% (Statistics Norway, 2008).

Houston, Kramer and Barrett (1984), note that on the international arena legal immigration during the last half of the twentieth century has been dominated by women, yet there is a persistent tendency to portray and theorize immigrant behavior and experiences from male migrants' experience. In Norway the trend is the same with women constituting half of the total of immigrants who have migrated to Norway.

Below is a summarized table showing the numbers of African immigrants living in Oslo by gender from selected countries as of 1. January, 2009. Please note that this table is not exhaustive of all African countries represented in Norway but only those that are of interest to this study and a few more.

**Table 1 Selected African countries represented in Oslo**

	<b>Country</b>	<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
<b>Some African countries represented in Oslo</b>		46 395	25 141	21 254
	Ethiopia	3 622	1 915	1 707
	Ghana	1 467	793	674
	Kenya	1 020	424	596
	South Africa	692	358	334
	Tanzania	602	277	325
	Rwanda	524	239	285
	Cameroon	383	218	165
	Zambia	265	110	155
	Zimbabwe	167	91	76
	Mozambique	112	43	69
	Botswana	66	34	32
	Malawi	62	31	31

(Source, SSB, 2009)

In the discussion on the participation of non-western immigrants in the labor market it is noted (SSB, 2007), that immigrants are highly over represented in the hotel and restaurant industry with 12% of all first generation immigrants working in the hotel and restaurant industry where women again constitute a large number of cleaners in the hotels.

The extent of involvement in the labor market is an indicator of the degree to which immigrants will have adapted and integrated to the society. A glance at the Statistics Norway data ((SSB, 2007), reveals that in the years 2004 and 2005 only 35, 5 % and 35, 7% respectively of the female immigrants from Africa were in employment as compared to their male counterparts who were on 45,6 % and 46,5% respectively. In the fourth quarter of 2007 African immigrants had the lowest level of employment with 49% followed by Asia with 56.3%. Furthermore SSB (2008), suggests that employment among women in these two groups is low and that women from these two regions take a longer time before they can be absorbed in the labor market.

Among the Somalis who represent Africa's largest group in Norway only 24 % of the women were in employment as compared to 45% from their male counterparts. Moreover it is observed that it is in this group that considerable gender inequality exists. From the nature of the above statics it is clear that there are salient dynamics that contribute and explain why women trail behind men in the labor market, which need to be brought to the surface. According to Alfred (2002), it is important to emphasize that the experiences of female immigrants do not always mirror that of their male counterparts, and that new studies are needed that would explore the experiences of female immigrants within the host cultural contexts. Since learning is an integral part of living, in order to understand their lived experiences, there is need to understand how the women learn and the nature of their learning.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Immigrant Women actively engage in education and the labor market and some are bread-winners who continue to keep ties with their families in their countries of origin. Most of these women send support in the form of remittances to their family members at home and thus contributing in the development of their countries' economies and also in the development of Norway's economy, their host country. These women also have education from their countries either formal or informal that they draw from and relate to in the process of adapting to a new culture. These women have valuable learning experiences, work experience and a culture that they carried with them from their countries of origin to a country

which sees those as being a hindrance and irrelevant to the adaptation process rather than an asset (Kemuma, 2000).

The dimension of culture is inextricably woven into the learning processes as the women, learn, engage in self-development and re-emerge as empowered individuals in their new adopted culture and their new roles. As these women move into foreign cultures, they bring in a view of the world that has been shaped by knowledge and values acquired from their original cultures. In crossing cultural and national boundaries, they are forced to negotiate these early learning and socialization experiences in order to successfully participate in the activities of the new culture and meet institutional and personal expectations (Alfred, 2002). Although new alternatives open up for them in the new country and new learning opportunities emerge adaptation is however not always a smooth process for many of them. There are many challenges that women who migrate from Africa face in the process of adapting to the new culture. The process of immigration for both men and women from developing countries and elsewhere is more often than not a very difficult and traumatic experience, which involves leaving behind familiar support systems and networks that one is used to and moving great distances to unknown foreign lands devoid of the usual African network of social relationships.

Studies on Immigration, social integration and mental health in Norway, with a focus on gender differences reveal that in Norway immigrant women are under more psychological stress than their male counterparts and therefore more vulnerable to psychiatric distress than men (Dalgard and Tapa, 2007). Another study also reveals that compared to women, men seem to assimilate more quickly to a culture than women do (Ward, 2001; citing Ghaffarian, 1987). Ward (ibid), suggests that because of the traditional gender roles women become negative to the effort of adapting to a new culture and that they are more likely to wish to retain a strong sense of cultural identity.

Among the many challenges that are faced by both male and female immigrants the question of language is one of the most challenging barriers. As an immigrant who cannot speak the language the pressure of not being able to communicate effectively and thus interact in the community as one would like can leave one feeling lonely and dejected, moreover it is



difficult to learn a language as an adult and be able to speak it fluently, a fact which the Norwegian society demands if one is to fit and function in it.

When they receive official documents written in Norwegian these women will normally depend on their husbands' translation for those who are married and/ or professional translators when they have to attend public offices or hospitals. This is often construed as an invasion of privacy by these women who often come from reserved traditional cultures. It goes without saying however that "language is at the heart of dual questions of cultural maintenance and participation in the larger society and also one of the most useful vehicles for participating in the social and economic institutions of the larger society". (Berry et. al., 1992: 302), therefore there is a pressing need to provide effective language training that will prepare these women for adaptation and subsequently integration into the society as well as the labor market. According to Vygotsky (1978), the two primary means of learning occur through social interaction and language. Language greatly enhances humans' ability to engage in social interactions and share their experiences.

The adoption of a new culture can also bring new challenges for immigrant women. In the process of settling into a new environment, they encounter new problems and conflicts between their original culture and the new culture. The conflict involves not only the internal family structure and the external social structure but also the way of preserving own culture. When two cultures are radically different like African culture and western culture in general, it is very difficult for the women to adapt and more often than not it is a problem to strike the balance on how far to go between the two cultures leaving women with a sense of lost identity among some women.

These challenges faced by women emphasize the need for the successful and urgent adaptation of African immigrant women to the new culture. The biggest challenge however is the invisibility that comes with the package of being a foreigner and an African woman. The desperation of reflecting on "Who I was then and who I am now" (Kemuma, 2000), the reflections above therefore prompt a study of this nature.

### **1.3 Aim of the study**

This research aims to explore, investigate and analyze the African immigrant woman's learning experiences within the transition and adaptation to a new culture and society, how they use such experiences in their learning and development in the host country where their educational and occupational experiences from their countries of origin are disregarded as lacking correspondence and how their past experiences inform and influence the way they participate in their new culture. It is worth mentioning that educational experiences are both formal and informal. Formal education relates to the public schooling at various levels whilst informal education refers to everyday situations.

This study therefore also seeks to investigate the role of both formal and informal language learning in this adaptation process, the relevance of adult language education offered by the system in Norway and how it supports women in their learning and self development so as not to remain invisible and voiceless. As an African immigrant woman myself, the study situates me within the group of the researched phenomena and I have used some of my experiences as a basis to conduct this research. The idea therefore is to research whilst at the same time learning from the experiences of other African women immigrants.

### **1.4 Research objectives and questions**

This study will be guided by the following research objectives.

- 1 To establish how the formal and informal language learning impacts the adaptation process of African women in Norway and how this adaptation process is in turn impacted by the prior knowledge and education that women acquired in their countries of origin.
- 2 To compare the styles of knowledge acquisition in formal and informal settings in the country of origin and in Norway and how these impact each other and influence the adaptation processes of the women.
- 3 To determine the extent to which formal language education offered to immigrant women is sensitive to their cultural identity and whether it provides them with the

skills necessary for empowerment, survival skills to function effectively in everyday life, participate in the labor force, to move out of the traditionally immigrant dominated jobs like cleaning, and to bring stability and a sense of belonging.

- 4 To compare how the Norwegian adult education (Voksenoppl ring) in language and informal education has contributed to the re-socialization/adaptation process of African immigrant women.

Below are the questions this study attempts to answer

- 1 How do African immigrant women describe their early learning and self development Experiences in their country of origin and later in Norway and how do these experiences impact their adaptation?
- 2 What formal and informal language-learning activities have the immigrant women participated in since coming to Norway?
- 3 How does culture and early schooling socialization influence immigrant women's adaptation and how have their learning experiences contributed to their socio-cultural, economic, or cultural adaptation?
- 4 How does the early learning experiences in the original country impact new learning experiences in the women's self development?
- 5 How do African Women cope with the changing gender roles in the new host culture?
- 6 What are the challenges faced by African immigrant women in the endeavor to adapt to the Norwegian culture and what strategies do African women use to manage expectations of their host culture in order to meet their goals of personal development?

## **1.5 Significance of the study**

There is a large volume of work that has been done on immigrants in many different countries, especially in countries like America and Canada, however not much has been done in Norway with the focus just on African women. The only African group that has received some attention in Norwegian research on immigrants is Somalia (SSB, 2006), and yet there are many African countries that are represented in the African immigrant population living in Norway. The study conducted by Henriksen for SSB (2006), concentrated on the living conditions and gender equality among immigrants and not on the experiences of women, the

study looked at ten countries with Somalia being the only African country representing Africa.

How people learn depends on how they are socialized, in turn how they are socialized depends on their culture. Moreover in a new country how people learn (the language and the culture) determines how they adapt to that new culture and this in turn determines how far they can be integrated into the society. Individuals learn to become members of a society and to function competently in that society by socialization. I therefore argue that understanding the learning processes of people is a part of understanding their socialization processes. Moreover real learning is to be able to adopt and to adapt to what one has learnt and use that knowledge that has been acquired through formal learning in different informal settings.

This makes this study important in filling the gap in knowledge about the past experiences and past knowledge of the African women and how they re-construct that knowledge and draw from it in their host country in the process of adaptation. It is hoped that this study will also contribute in giving the women self-awareness through the realization that they are cultural beings in the construction of the self. The connection between the previous experiences in the original culture and the new experiences in the host culture will also provide understanding to the Norwegian society as a whole of the African women's ways of knowing and therefore in the efforts employed to integrate the women it will be taken into consideration about who they are, what makes them tick and how they learn.

Furthermore in highlighting the women's perspectives on issues pertaining to moving into a different culture as an adult woman, although I do not claim to be the spokesperson and the voice behind the African women living in Norway, this study will contribute in sensitizing the integration powers that be on challenges faced by African women in their adaptation processes and hopefully bring changes where it is necessary to do so with regards to the language education offered to immigrants and endeavors in their integration into the larger society.

## **1.6 Introducing myself as the researcher**

According to Merrill and West (2009), the choice of a topic may be sometimes shaped by personal concerns or experiences. Moreover Patton (2004) and Kvale (1996), add that if this be the case it is better for the researcher to present him/herself and be open about where she/he stands in the research to clear biases. In this vein, below follows a brief introduction of myself as the researcher and participant in this research as done by Alfred (2002), in a similar research in America where she interviewed 15 British Caribbean women for her research in their ways of knowing where she was also a participant whilst conducting her study.

I am a Zimbabwean woman in my forties who immigrated to Norway for family reunion ten years ago. Before I immigrated to Norway I had been working as a teacher for many years. I attained my education at a time when Zimbabwe was under colonial rule and equal opportunities did not exist for the majority of the masses. The education offered at that time was highly selective and competitive. It had been my wish to obtain university education in those subjects I had a passion for, but the endeavor to apply for admission at the by then only university in the country proved to be a futile exercise.

When the opportunity to migrate to Norway presented itself I took it and embarked on the search for how I could develop myself education wise. For some years it was not easy to get a university in Norway that offered undergraduate programs conducted in the English language. Bachelor programs were being taught in Norwegian in all Norwegian universities that I applied to. To obtain Norwegian language education was very expensive, there were rules stipulating which group of immigrant could qualify for sponsorship by the state in this education, and I did not qualify. Meanwhile I got a job as a cleaner at a hotel to make ends meet.

Two years after that a university in Oslo opened its doors to the first group of students to take an undergraduate program in English and I grabbed the opportunity. I applied, got admitted and began my studies for a bachelor degree. At the same time I was studying for my bachelor degree I studied the Norwegian language as by then I could qualify to be sponsored by the state and I was able to pass the highest level for adult Norwegian language education (the

Bergen Test. I graduated at this university almost at the same time as I passed my language course. Efforts to get a job proved futile and I decided to pursue a master's degree at the University of Oslo. It had not been my intention to settle permanently in Norway but the changing circumstances in my personal life made me finally settle. My experiences during my studies in these institutions and my experiences in the society as a whole during the period of adaptation inspired this research.

## **1.7 Key concepts**

### **Culture**

Culture is defined as those values, beliefs, behaviors, practices and material objects that constitute a peoples way of life. Culture is learned and transmitted through generations it dictates the behaviors of a cultural group and reflects their world view in general. Language is an important vehicle in the transmission of culture (Berry, 1997).

### **Adaptation**

Adaptation is a concept that is inclusive and can have different meanings depending on how it is applied. However for the purposes of this study adaptation will be taken to mean the processes by which individuals who have uprooted from familiar surroundings in their own culture and migrated to a new culture have to adjust to a new socio-cultural environment. Taft (1977: 121), posits that “adaptation to unfamiliar cultures is a special case of responding to a new environmental event, where that event is complex, enduring, and social in nature and where it has a cultural context that is unfamiliar to the actor”.

According to Berry (1997), adaptation is not a term that necessarily means that individuals change to become more like their environment. Berry observes that adaptation may or may not improve the fit between individuals and the environment. Berry et. Al. (1988), suggests that there are three strategies of adaptation which can be observed on adapting individuals. These are termed adjustment, reaction and withdrawal. In adjustment individuals behave in a way that reduces conflict and increases the fit this way bringing harmony with the environment. In the case of reaction the behavior of the adapting individual behaves in a way

that retaliates against the environment and this may lead to conflict as the individual refuses to accept the new culture. This phenomenon might lead to withdrawal where the individual decides to withdraw and reduce conflict by staying away from the environment which demands adjustments to be made.

### **Formal and Informal Learning**

Generally speaking education refers to what happens in the formal school but in reality education means more than that; it results from both formal and informal learning.

Formal learning refers to that learning that is highly institutionalized and takes place in the school, college or universities. Formal learning is guided by a designed and specified curriculum and trained personnel provide this type of education. This type of learning is based on a particular outline that has to be completed within a specified period.

On the other hand informal learning refers to responses to everyday situations inside and outside the home and it can involve simple observations and imitations of situations, it does not necessarily follow a planned or designed curriculum, it usually occurs in a variety of settings and it is incidental. Such settings can include the home, outside the school, at work and in the community or the society at large through everyday interactions and shared relationships and experiences. Informal learning can include language learning, cultural norms, and learning of certain behaviors that are not necessarily taught at the school.

### **Discourse**

Since this study is leaning strongly on the personal experiences of the participants and these participants being women and accounts of significant events in the participants lives make up the bulk of this study it is imperative that discourse cannot be separated from this study. It is therefore in accordance that the word discourse must be examined. The word discourse has different meanings and uses as there are different scholars.

Discourse according to Foucault (1972), refers to different ways knowledge is constituted with social practice; the way people talk and think about a particular subject being guided by particular assumptions. Discourse refers to patterns of speech and usage of language and

acceptable statements within a community. The term discourse is used to describe the conversations and their meanings by a group of people who hold certain ideas in common. Potter (2004), also adds that sometimes discourse is a word for language in use.



## **Chapter Two**

### **2.0 Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

When doing research it is vital to review the literature that already exists on the topic that one wants to embark on. Doing literature review allows the researcher to learn more about what has or has not been done on the study in question; it also gives the researcher the opportunity to develop arguments about the significance of the study of interest (Bryman, 2008). Patton (2002), posits that reviewing the literature brings focus to a study however Patton warns that there is a danger that literature review in qualitative research may bias how the researcher thinks and reduce openness to what may emerge out of the data. For the purposes of this study it is important to navigate through the maze of some of the literature that has been collected on the different interesting aspects of the topic.

#### **2.2 Socialization as Enculturation**

Socialization is the process whereby an individual learns their culture and how to live within that culture. Maccoby (2007), refers to socialization as processes where naive individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up. Socialization is a process of lifelong interaction through which individuals acquire a self-identity and the physical, mental and social skills needed for survival in society and providing the link between an individual and society through the transmission of culture. When this occurs in one's own culture of origin the term enculturation is employed (Berry, 1992).

Through enculturation, the norms, values and behaviors are transmitted among subsequent generations by parents to their offspring and this is termed by Berry et. Al. (1992; citing Cavalli-Sforza and Fieldman, 1981), as vertical transmission. The process of socialization also happens outside the home by other members of the society as peers, the school and other adults outside the family and this is termed horizontal transmission of culture. Berry et. Al. (1992), suggest that the end result if enculturation is successful is an individual who is

competent in the culture, including the language, values and other important aspects of culture.

However if the process of cultural transmission occurs within a new culture the terms acculturation and re-socialization become more appropriate (Berry et. Al., 1992). Giddens (2006), contends that socialization processes continue throughout life. According to Giddens (2006), socialization processes occur in different arenas, with the family being the main agent of socialization. Socialization “....prepares the individual for the roles she or he is to play, providing him/her with the necessary repertoire of habits, beliefs, and values, the appropriate patterns of emotional response and the modes of perception, the requisite skills and knowledge. On the other hand, by communicating the contents of culture from one generation to the other, it provides for its persistence and continuity” (Chinoy, 1961:75).

Hesse-Biber (2006), in the article, *Becoming a Certain Body* contends that socialization not only creates an individual’s self-identity but can also shape the desires, wants, and aspirations of the individual, in this respect the way we are socialized shapes us into those beings that we eventually become. Coleman (1990), observes that secondary socialization occurs at the school through public education whereby various techniques are used to socialize new entrants to give them new identity socialization.

### **2.3 Socialization as Acculturation**

When individuals migrate to a new culture the process of socialization continues, however since immigrants must learn new skills to survive in the new culture, re-socialization takes over as changes occur while they adapt to the new context. As the identity of people is an attribute they borrow from their setting through socialization (Geertz, 1979), being introduced to a new culture poses challenges for the immigrant. In his discussion on the concept of acculturation, Berry (1997), refers to it as those societal and cultural changes that happen to individuals due to immigration.

Berry (ibid), proposes that acculturation refers to cultural and psychological changes brought about by contact with other peoples belonging to different cultures. According to Berry (2007), acculturation occurs when individuals come into firsthand contact with a new culture

that is different from their own and where these individuals have to change their behavioral repertoire in order to fit in the new culture. Berry et. Al. (1997), argue that the experience of acculturation varies with each individual and not every person will participate to the same extent in the process and this is because there are many variables that influence this process.

Furthermore (ibid) the process of acculturation is influenced by three variables and these are voluntariness, mobility and permanence. It is worth mentioning that the different groups of immigrants fall within these three criteria, voluntariness refers to those who migrated due to their own choosing, like international students or guest workers whilst those who are involuntary would be those immigrants who are forced to immigrate due to unstable situations in their countries like refugees or women forced to join their husbands who for some reason had to migrate to Norway. Abrahamsen and Berg (2005), agree with Berry in that voluntariness affects the adaptation outcome in a country.

Murphy (1965), argues that in the case of the adaptation of women it is usually the men who decide to migrate and the women have no choice but to follow. The immigrants who have migrated to Norway fall within the category of those who have been mobile. Whether the settlement in a new culture is permanent or temporary plays an important role in the acculturation process and will by and large influence how the immigrants will adapt. In this study the women settled in Norway for diverse reasons and hence they fall in one way or the other within these variables and categories mentioned above.

When conceptualizing psychological acculturation Berry (1997), proposes that immigrants go through behavioral shifts, and he posits that these are changes in individual's behavioral repertoire which can be easily accomplished and are non problematic. According to Berry this process encompasses two sub processes and these are culture shedding and culture learning. In this period of adjustment the immigrant is learning new behaviors and shedding the original behaviors in order to achieve a better fit within the new culture (Berry, 2007 citing Berry, 1992).

However within this process, levels of conflict can be experienced which can be viewed as being problematic but can be surmountable, hence resulting in acculturative stress.

Acculturative stress can be defined as "...stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation" (Berry, 2007:553). When this phenomena happens

individuals find strategies to cope with it which are often successful but in some cases the changes in the cultural context can be too difficult to cope with and the process of adaptation can be a challenge thus leading to psychological disturbances such as clinical depression or mental illness (Abrahamsen & Berg, 2005).

## **2.4 Discourse Analysis**

This study will also be guided by discourse perspectives and hence discourse analysis.

Foucault (1972), describes discourse as the conversations and the meaning behind them by a group of people who hold certain ideas in common. Phillips and Hardy (2002), define discourse as an “interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination and reception that brings an object into being”. According to Locke (2004), language is at the heart of discourse analysis and as a form of cultural and social practice, discourse analysis is an approach that allows the description and interpretation of social life as it is represented in talk and texts. Locke (ibid), proposes that discourse is language in use and he contends that meanings are socially constructed through language and text and interlocked in the cultural context.

Discourse analysis focuses particularly on the relationship between power and discourse, studying the way in which ‘social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context’ (Van Dijk 2001: 352). Women’s ways of knowing are inextricably linked and associated to discourse. As Van Dijk (2003: 87), puts it “Discourse production and understanding is impossible without knowledge and knowledge acquisition and change usually presupposes discourse. Indeed it has been claimed that whatever is socially relevant of knowledge is usually also expressed in text talk...” Discourse plays a major role in shaping how ideas are put forward and used to regulate how others act (Giddens, 1982).

According to Potter (2004), discourse is action-oriented, situated and constructed. Discourse is action-oriented in that it is put together to get things done as accepted practices. For example the discourse on gender in the African setting allows men to assume the role of the head of the family responsible for all the decisions in the home. This practice is accepted by the larger society without any question. Discourse is situated in the sense that actions do not

hang in space (ibid), but they respond to other actions. Discourse is created through interactions that are oriented to institutional settings and identities for example the family or the community. Potter asserts that discourse is also constructed out of language patterns for example idioms that are used by individuals thus it constructs and stabilizes versions of the world. Through language discourse is produced to create guidelines on how a group of individuals who hold the same identities and believe in the same values will behave in an acceptable manner in that community. Through this vein discourse analysis can be a useful tool to understand the perspectives of the participants in this study.

Some discourse theorists disagree with the idea of connecting discourse to broader theoretical frameworks for the reason that data should be given the opportunity to speak for themselves (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). However I have chosen to go along with those researchers who use theoretical traditions to influence research questions for this study. I believe this will allow the study to be evaluated also by those who are not in full agreement with discourse perspectives. Since discourse is a social construction it is useful for this study which is mainly rooted on constructivist rhetoric.

## **2.5 Conceptualizing gender equality**

The concept of gender equality is as elusive as the concept of culture. Whilst most governments have accepted gender equality as an important goal to be achieved in most countries, a clear-cut definition of the concept is still hotly debated and contested (Lombardo et. al., 2009). Different meanings attached to gender equality differ according to different contextual settings. Whilst gender equality may be labeled as the empowerment of women in one context and equal opportunities in another the content within these two concepts themselves may vary widely across contexts. Thus Lombardo, et. al. (2009), contend that the labels of gender equality can be misleading in these attempts to understand the concept. However in this study the objective is not to dissect the dynamics of gender equality politics, and the many different perspectives of gender equality, which can be time consuming, but to understand gender equality within cultural contexts from the point of view of the participants in this study.

Loosely expressed gender equality strives to situate women and men in an equal footing. The two groups have the same capabilities and therefore deserve to have equal opportunities. Between the two groups there is not one that is superior to the other and neither is there one that should be subordinate to the other. The degree to which societies are receptive to this view is mainly dependant on their different cultures. When looking at gender equality from a cultural perspective reference may be made to Hofstede's (1983) discussion on these cultural differences as being directed by four dimensions of culture, namely power distance, uncertainty, individualism and masculinity which is connected to gender equality and therefore of interest to this research.

Hofstede (ibid), provides and compares the scores of different countries on masculinity to show how these countries tend to be accommodative to masculinity as opposed to femininity. When a country has a very low score on masculinity this shows that there is generally a positive attitude towards gender equality and individuals are given equal opportunities regardless of their gender. When a country's score is high this reflects a patriarchal society which is less receptive to gender equality. It is interesting to note that the Scandinavian countries have the lowest scores on masculinity with Sweden with the lowest at five and Norway following at eight as compared to South Africa, which represents the African countries with a sixty three.

Inglert and Norris (2003), argue that culture plays a major role in the issues of gender equality. The two researchers propose that how a given society perceives the division of roles in the home, family and the society at large is shaped by the predominant culture. Gender is defined by constructed roles and learned behavior as dictated by the gender discourse of the predominant culture. Women and men adopt attitudes and values as dictated by gender discourse. Inglert and Norris (ibid: 9), argue "cultural change is a necessary condition for gender equality". However cultural change is not an erratic process that happens overnight cultural change comes with the learning of the culture and in the case of African women moving from cultures which are predominantly patriarchal to a country whose culture is based on egalitarian traditions there is a need for attitudinal shifts and help with the learning of the new culture.

Inglehart and Norris (2003), suggest that there are two other dimensions of cultural variation influencing the degree to which gender equality is perceived positively in a given culture. The first dimension is the traditional/secular rational, which contrasts value systems found in religious versus secular societies. The two researchers posit that traditional societies put emphasis on parent-child ties in traditional families, authority and submission is emphasized along with high moral standards that are expected. Secular-rational societies have opposite values.

The second dimension the survival/self-expression involves the polarization between materialist and post materialist values. Here the emphasis is not on economic security but on self-expression and the concern is on the quality of life. Inglehart and Norris argue that societies that emphasize survival values have materialistic orientations and among other values these countries emphasize hard work as compared to imagination or tolerance as being the most important value to teach a child. On the other hand the societies emphasizing self-expression display opposite preferences.

There are major differences in the world-view regarding these two dimensions between the rich countries of the west and low-income countries. Most countries of Africa score below zero on the cultural map scale as presented by the researchers while high-income countries rank higher on both survival and self-expression. Data collected by the two researchers indicates that economic development brings about changes in values and that in those countries ranking high on the scale there are more positive attitudes towards gender equality. However there is need to point out that economic development alone is not an absolute indicator of human development as there are other indicators which also predict support for gender equality.

## **2.6 Conceptualizing Culture**

The concept of culture is an elusive one to grasp. Different researchers and authors have come up with different descriptions of culture however they all agree that culture is transmitted and handed down through generations. Varner and Beamer (2005), contend that culture involves learned and shared behaviors, norms, values and material objects (symbols) which bind

members of a group together to give a sense of belonging. Paige, et. (CARLA), note that culture is not static but dynamic and variable and that it changes constantly as the group develops new values and perspective on things and that the meaning is continuously constructed through interaction and communication with other groups.

The learning of culture is an ongoing life process and language is an important medium used to transmit this learning process. Verner and Beamer (2005: 5 citing Hall), write that “Culture is those deep, common, unstated experiences which members of a given culture share, which they communicate without knowing, and which form the backdrop against which all other events are judged” In this vein it can be argued that one’s own culture is a yardstick that is used to measure and judge other cultures against others’ culture. Culture shapes us into whom and what we are and become, as it is a source of dialogue, exchange, innovation and creativity. Individuals find forms of expression and forms of transmitting knowledge through culture.

The participants in this study are women who have previous knowledge and experiences acquired from their original culture and with the crossing of borders they have to learn a new language and a new culture in order to survive, cope and develop themselves in the new culture. This provides a doubled challenge for the women. Paige, et. Al. (CARLA) defines the learning of culture as a process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures, it is a developmental and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviorally and affectively.

## **2.7 Language learning and adaptation**

Language is an important tool in the transmission of culture and can be used as an important facilitator in the re-socialization process as Berry, et. Al. (1992), puts it. Re-socialization in this respect is being used as an inclusive term involving all kinds of social influences for positive, neutral and negative assimilation and accommodation. While socialization refers to all factors and processes that help to prepare and equip an individual for social life in human



societies, re-socialization on the other hand is a consequence of the adaptation process set in motion by the settlement into a new society (Rivera, 1992).

Language learning therefore plays a vital role in the process of re-socialization and adaptation subsequently. Language is also very important in participating and in the social and economic institutions in the wider society (Berry, et. al., 1997). During the acculturation process immigrants are forced to deal with the new culture language. IN A study conducted among Mexicans Living in Norway Fernandez-Ordenez ( 1998), states that cultural meaning systems consist of shared ideas, values and beliefs which are transmitted through language therefore it is imperative for the immigrant to learn the language to be able to participate in the wider society. Essentially when immigrants come to Norway it is a requirement by the law that they must attend Norwegian lessons in order to be active, to participate and to function in the society. Moreover to get into employment and to avoid being socially isolated one must be conversant in the Norwegian language.

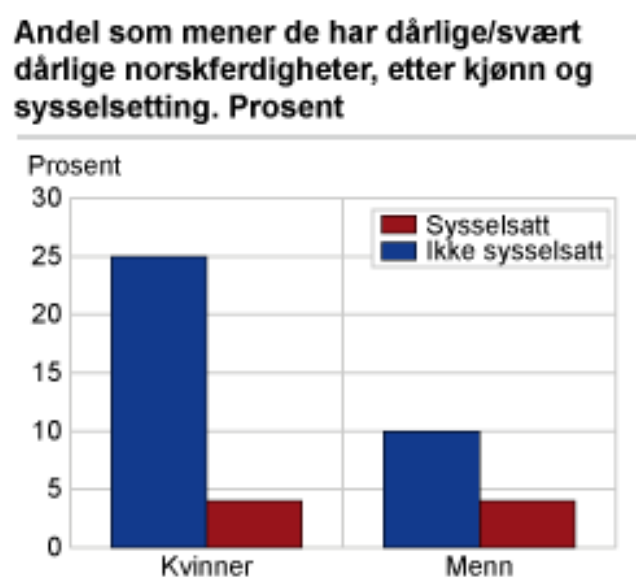
The Introduction Act entitles and obligates newly arrived immigrants to participate in a full-time introduction program for up to two years. The right and obligation to participate in the introduction program applies to newly arrived foreign nationals between 18 and 55 years of age who need to obtain basic qualifications and who a) have been granted asylum, b) are resettlement refugees who have been granted leave to enter the country, c) have been granted residence on humanitarian grounds based on an application for asylum or collective protection in a situation of mass outflow, or d) are family members arriving for family unification with persons as mentioned under a, b or c (IMDI, I facts,2009).

Through the introduction program immigrants can acquire basic skills in Norwegian, as well as a basic insight into Norwegian society. The program is also meant to prepare participants for to take part in the labor market. Persons who take part in the program are entitled to an introduction grant. The municipality and NAV work in close collaboration with regard to the program. The right and obligation to participate in free Norwegian language and social studies education for a total of 300 hours applies to foreign nationals between 16 and 55 years of age who have been granted a residence or work permit pursuant to the Immigration Act which forms the basis for a settlement permit (ibid). If participants feel that they still need further training in the language they can continue up to 4000 hours of tuition.

There are two national final Norwegian language examinations, Norwegian examination level two and three, both written and oral. The third level examination tests language skills at a higher level than the second level (IMDI, I facts, 2009). After level 3 it is usually assumed that individuals are competent enough in the Norwegian language to be able to contribute in the labor market. For those who wish to engage in academic endeavors of a higher level, a higher qualification can be attainable through the Bergenstest. Depending on what one aspires to pursue the acceptable scores to be obtained range from 350 to 500 points and above.

The two graphs below reflect the effect of not having enough language capabilities among some immigrant interviewees who were interviewed by researchers for IMDI (2009). The first graph reflects that from the population chosen of those women who responded that they thought they were not good in Norwegian 25 % of them were not in employment and slightly less than 5% were in employment and among men only 10 % were unemployed and 5% were not in employment. The second graph reflects that for those women immigrants' interviewees who indicated that they sometimes felt lonely 18% were unemployed and 10 % were employed and for the men 14 % were not employed versus 8% who are employed. These figures reflect that women are the more affected than men (Please note that these are not just immigrants from Africa).

Figure 1: Percentage who believe that they have poor Norwegian skills by gender and employment.

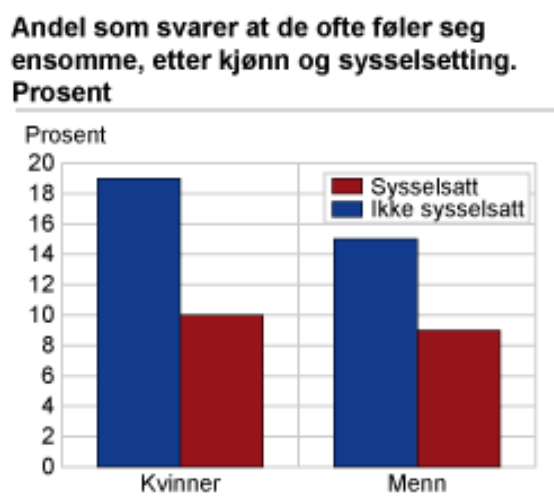


(Source, IMDI, 2009)

## Key translations

Prosent	percentage
Sysselsatt	employed
Ikke sysselsatt	not employed
Kvinner	women
Menn	men

Figure 2: Percentage responding that they feel lonely by gender and employment.



(Source, IMDI, 2009)

## Key translations

Prosent	percentage
Sysselsatt	employed
Ikke sysselsatt	not employed
Kvinner	women
Menn	men

## 2.8 Conceptualizing adaptation

According to Berry (2007), adaptation is a result of attempts to cope with acculturation changes. As mentioned earlier in the chapter it does not necessarily follow that adaptation is always positive and successful, the extent of adaptation is highly variable and may range between poorly adapted to well adapted. Berry (2007; citing Ward 1996), mentions a distinction between psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. According to Ward

psychological adaptation has to do with an individuals' psychological and physical well being this includes a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health and personal satisfaction where as socio-cultural adaptation refers to how well an individual undergoing the acculturation process is able to manage their everyday life in the new culture. Economic adaptation refers to the degree to which the immigrant is involved in the labor market and finds his employment satisfying and gratifying to her or him (Fernandez-Ordenez, 1998).

In the process of adaptation, acculturating individuals require to learn and accept new behavioral norms (Taft, 1987). They do this by engaging in social contacts with people they do not know, they observe and they learn, trying to decipher new symbols, sometimes a new language. Learning is sometimes by trial and error and according to Taft (ibid) sometimes by way of a cultural mediator who acts as a model to assist in the adaptation process.

## **2.9 Conceptualizing Integration**

An individual or group is integrated within a society when they are socially connected with members of a (cultural, ethnic, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities, and with relevant services and functions of state, and have linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship, (British Home Office Department). Marambanyika (2008; citing Gullestad (2002), notes that Integration means that the immigrant participates fully, but there is no necessity to give up their national and religious characteristics. According to Alpass, et. Al. (2007), integration is when the immigrants maintain some of their cultural integrity and they can adjust their behavior to become an integral part of the dominant society.

“Immigrant integration is a dynamic, two way process in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant, cohesive communities” ( D Petsod et. Al., GCIR).

## **Chapter Three**

### **3.0 Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

There are several factors that play a significant role in the adaptation processes of African immigrant women as they negotiate the transition from their original cultures to their new culture. Early experiences in their original culture and new experiences in the new culture are linked to shape up a new reality as the women embark on the journey to learn a new culture, a new language and self develop themselves to meet the demands of the new culture.

There is an inevitable need therefore for applying different theoretical perspectives in order to investigate and understand the complexity of formal and informal education in language learning and in the adaptation processes and self-development of these women. This study will be guided by the following theories

#### **3.2 Constructivism**

Constructivist epistemology is a world-view where individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work (Cresswell, 2007). According to Fisher (1991), constructivist epistemology is a theory of knowledge acquisition that focuses on how people learn and the nature of the knowledge. Fisher refers to constructivism as a way of knowing. This epistemology proposes that individuals develop subjective meanings of different experiences. Constructivist theory suggests that learners, individually and socially, construct knowledge for themselves, and such meaning constructions are the foundation for knowledge. This concept suggests that individuals are continually recreating knowledge through the process of using it and questioning taken-for-granted assumptions. Learning is therefore a multidimensional process that encompasses cognition, culture, and community (Vygotsky, 1978).

The premise of constructivism is based on the fact that knowledge is constructed about reality and it becomes grounded in relationships and experience. Thus there are multiple realities which are constructed and shaped by cultural linguistics (Patton, 2002). Constructivists argue that these constructions have implications for the lives of those who construct them and in their interactions with others. According to constructivist theorists knowledge is made meaningful by the ways in which the learner establishes connections among knowledge learned, previous experiences, and the context of the learning situation.

Vygotsky (1978), refers to learning as being an activity that occurs in a social environment. According to Vygotsky learning is more than just a cognitive process and it emphasizes the influences of cultural and social contexts in the learning. He argues that learning and development are social and collaborative activities that cannot be taught to anyone (Vygotsky, 1978). His theory suggests that it is up to the individual to construct his or her understanding of the learning, based on the social and cultural context of the experience.

The constructivist conceptions of learning suggest that humans create or construct knowledge as they attempt to bring meaning to their experiences, that knowledge is constantly evolving as human beings undergo new experiences, that learning is enhanced as new knowledge is tested against old experiences and shared in communal settings, and that individuals have the power of agency in negotiating their own learning and development activities (Alfred, 2002).

On the other hand Rotter (1982), basis his theory of social learning on the premise that personality is represented by the interaction of the individual with the environment, Rotter suggests that in order for behavior to be fully understood life histories of the individual and their experiences must be taken into account vis a vis the environment. Furthermore he argues that individuals are driven by their desire to fulfill their goals and that they seek to maximize reinforcement. This theory constitutes of four components, namely, behavior potential, expectancy, reinforcement value and the psychological situation. Rotter (1982), contends that Behavior potential is the likelihood of an individual engaging in a particular behavior at a given time or specific situation. Rotter suggests that individuals will assess whether a certain behavior will have a high or low potential and they will subsequently engage in that behavior, which they perceive will have a high potential.

Expectancy is the probability whether a given behavior will result in a certain outcome or reinforcement. Individuals are most likely to engage in that behavior in which they have high expectations of getting the desired outcome (ibid). However Rotter warns that expectancy is a subjective probability in the sense that individuals can over or underestimate the likelihood of the outcome and this can be problematic for the individual. Reinforcement value is the outcome of a certain behavior. Individuals put a high reinforcement value on those things that they want to happen and those things they do not want to happen have a low reinforcement value. Individuals will therefore engage in that behavior directed toward the outcome they mostly prefer. According to Rotter (1982), how people interpret situations depends on their psychological situation, people's subjective interpretation of the environment determines how they behave.

These social learning theories will help us understand how the immigrant women learn and how their social interaction with the new environment influences their adaptation within the new culture. The dynamics that are at play when they learn a new language and when they develop strategies to find their way and a new identity in a new country and then developing themselves subsequently need to be examined through the constructivist epistemology. By and large the participants' views that will come up in this study are subjective constructions that are negotiated socially and historically and they are formed through interactions with others and through historical norms that exist in the participants' lives that is why it useful to use these theories

### **3.3 Transformative Learning Theory**

When discussing perspective transformation, Mezirow (1978), asserts that cultural norms, personal characteristics and life circumstances impact on a learner's ability to engage in the perspective transformation process. Perspective transformation explains how the meaning structures that adults have acquired over a lifetime become transformed. These meaning structures are frames of reference that are based on the totality of individuals' cultural and contextual experiences, which influence how they behave and interpret events.

Adults have acquired a body of knowledge a coherent body of experience – assumptions, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses-frames of reference that define their world (Mezirow, et. Al., 2000; citing Mezirow, 1997). Centrality of experience, critical reflection,

and rational discourse are three common themes in Mezirow's theory (Taylor 2000a), Mezirow posits that for learners to change their meaning schemes (specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions) they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation (Mezirow 2000). Perspective transformation explains how the meaning structures that adults have acquired over a lifetime become transformed.

These meaning structures are frames of reference that are based on the totality of individuals' cultural and contextual experiences and that influence how they behave and interpret events (Taylor, 2000a). The frame of reference is the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we make sense of our own world. It is a way of knowing, in their childhood the women in this study were socialized into certain ways of knowing within the home and the community and at school they were again socialized into other ways of knowing. The home and the community provided informal learning rooted in constructive epistemology where as the school provided knowledge that was taken from the model of the colonizers which provided objective knowledge based on behavioral epistemology.

According to Mezirow (2000), meaning structures will influence how individuals handle certain issues. The meaning schemes that make up meaning structures may change as an individual adds to or integrates ideas within an existing scheme and, this transformation of meaning schemes occurs routinely through learning. Perspective transformation leading to transformative learning, however, occurs much less frequently. Mezirow believes that it usually results from a "disorienting dilemma," which is triggered by a life crisis or major life transition, although it may also result from an accumulation of transformations in meaning schemes over a period of time (Mezirow, 1978). In this research the transition from one's own culture to another culture and learning of a new language at adulthood would be seen as that life crisis.

Meaning schemes are based upon experiences that can be deconstructed and acted upon in a rational way (Taylor, 2000a). Mezirow (2000), suggests this happens through a series of phases that begin with the disorienting dilemma. Other phases include self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that others have shared similar transformations, exploration of new roles or actions, development of a plan for action,



acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing the plan, trying out of the plan, development of competence and self-confidence in new roles, and reintegration into life on the basis of new perspectives (ibid). It can be argued that the participants of this research have undergone these phases.

As described by Mezirow (ibid), transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds.

Transformative learning according to Taylor (2000), expands options and facilitates taking the perspectives of others who have alternative ways of understanding.

Transformative theory refers to the way in which we know and make meanings and transformative learning depends on particular environmental and cultural forces at work in individuals' life (Daloz 2000). When Daloz (2000), examines Mezirow's theory of transformative learning he suggests that in the various stages of a human being's enculturation, the social context matters a great deal. The researcher argues that the early years in an individuals' life give a lifelong core identity and thus equip individuals with tools to deal with developments in the future.

Daloz (ibid), posits that there are four conditions that lead to an individual's transformation, these are the presence of the other, reflective discourse a mentoring community and opportunities for committed action, these are not exhaustive as there are other conditions that can be present, however for this research the four mentioned above will suffice.

### **3.3.1 Reflective Discourse**

According to Mezirow (2000), reflective discourse is a specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief. Reflective discourse leads to critical assessments of assumptions and to a clear understanding by tapping on collective experience to arrive at best judgments. Discourse is the forum in which finding one's voice becomes a pre-requisite for free full participation. Mezirow contends that to participate in discourse and transformative learning one requires emotional maturity, awareness, empathy and control, to motivate one's self and to think

clearly. Discourse requires only that participants have the will and readiness to seek understanding and to reach some reasonable agreement. Feelings of trust, solidarity, security and empathy are essential preconditions for free full participation in discourse. Discourse is not based on winning arguments; it involves finding agreement welcoming difference, trying on other points of view. Reflective discourse involves a temporary suspension of judgments about a belief or disbelief in ideas until a better determination can be made. To participate in the discourse participants must have among others an equal opportunity to participate in various roles of discourse.

### **3.3.2 The Presence of the other**

Daloz (2000), contends that diversity and interaction with others can cause us to evolve and see things from a different perspective from what we used to. Experiences from childhood solidify and secure the personal identity of individuals such that when certain discourses, for example gender or racial discourses are encountered later on in life individuals are able to handle them in a proper manner.

### **3.3.3 Critical Reflection**

In agreement with Mezirow, Daloz (2000), contends that for transformative learning to occur there must be conscious critical reflection on early assumptions about one's life on the part of the individual. We make meaning with different dimensions of awareness and understanding. In adulthood we may understand our experiences better when we know under what conditions an expressed idea is true or justified. In the absence of fixed truths and in the event of changes in our circumstances we cannot fully trust what we know or believe. Interpretations and opinions that may have worked for us as children often do not as adults. Mezirow (2000), argues that transformative learning is the process in which individuals actively engage in dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience and he observes that this includes emotional, social as well as cognitive components. According to Mezirow (ibid), transformation proceeds from the progressive taking in, digesting and reconstructing of perspectives that are different from our own.

### **3.3.4 A Mentoring Community**

For transformative learning to occur there is usually a mentor standing behind and influencing the individual, one who acts as a role model, the significant other who encourages or is much admired and the individual is aspiring to be like them. These can be other adults, teachers business people and these people encourage a deeper sense of purpose (Daloz, 2000).

### **3.3.5 Opportunities for Committed Action**

For an individual to be able to commit to an action leading to transformative learning there must be an opportunity available to do so. In the case of the participants in this study an opportunity presented itself to develop themselves when they moved to Norway where equal opportunities exist for everyone alike.

Transformative learning theory has received much critic however from other researchers, who question certain aspects. Taylor (2000), raises questions about the meaning, and differences of meaning perspectives and meaning schemes. Taylor also challenges the idea of rational discourse as presented by Mezirow (2000), and argues that relationships with others play an important role in transformative learning and that trusts and support gained through friendships are some of the necessary elements that provide essential conditions for effective rational discourse.

“It is through building trusting relationships that learning develops the necessary openness and confidence to deal with learning on an effective level, which is essential for managing the threatening and emotionally charged experience of transformation” (Taylor, 2000a: 308 ). Taylor argues that it is through relationships that emotions and feelings can be explored during transformative learning and this way the provision of the genuine discourse necessary for perspective transformation.

On transformative theory Belenky and Stanton (2000), argue that reflective discourse develops best when participants are well informed, free from coercion, listen actively, have

equal opportunities to participate and take a critical stance towards established cultural norms or viewpoints. This condition is problematic where most of the participants in my study are concerned, whilst reflective discourse and critical thinking provide the tools for development the cultural systems both in the homes and the schools attended by the participants did not encourage this. Moving to an egalitarian culture like Norway has thus provided the participants with this condition and opportunity.

### **3.4 Feminist Theories**

Feminist theories have contributed a great deal in the re-assessment of patriarchal structures in most African Countries as well as globally. They have been used as mechanisms to make changes in societies and via these theories research on existing systems and patriarchal strongholds have been challenged and changes have been made to realize the importance of women as being equally important members of the society. Kurubai (2008: 37; citing Oakley 1981: 39), writes, “A dominant group inevitably has the greatest influence in determining a culture’s overall outlook- its morality, social theory and even its science. The dominant group, thus legitimizes the unequal relationship and incorporates it into society’s guiding concepts (...) the dominant group is the model for normal human relationships. It then becomes normal to treat others destructively and to derogate them, to obscure the truth of what you are doing by creating false explanations and to oppose actions towards equality”.

#### **3.4.1 The Standpoint Theory**

There are several feminist theories that are referred to in the fight for the cause of feminism. Different scholars have different opinions on them and they are not in agreement as to which one is the best and effective, it can be mentioned that there is not one theory that can be absolute in its use, and there is also not one specific method that is solely feminist, however for this study I have chosen to use the Standpoint theory which also has its criticisms from several theorists.

Feminist standpoint epistemology requires us to place women at the center of the research process. Women's concrete experiences provide the starting point from which to build knowledge. And only by making women's concrete, life experiences the primary source of our investigations can we succeed in constructing knowledge that accurately reflects and represents women. An important aspect in research on women is the respect given to the participants. Their capability and potential to produce knowledge themselves is acknowledged.

The standpoint theory situates the researcher within the plane of her research topic to validate or justify her knowledge claims, thus making the research participatory (Naples, 2003). (Letherby 2003:62), writes “Feminist standpoints begin with but do not end with women's experiences, and as in the other standpoint epistemologies, they are not just perspectives they involve a level of awareness and consciousness about one's social location and this location relates to one's lived experiences”.

Standpoint theory argues that belonging to a group in hierarchical power relations produces shared challenges in that group and therefore allows the members of that group to view things from a similar perspective, Naples (2003). The feminist theory is woman centered in that it starts by investigating the situations and experiences of women in the society. Women are the central subjects in the investigative process and in feminist theory the world is seen from a distinctive view-point of women in a society. The theory suggests that when women take a stand to change the structures that keep them subordinate they make a standpoint (Hartsock, 1987). Since this is a study about women from patriarchal countries trying to re-emerge in a foreign culture through all odds the feminist theory is in accordance in this study

## **Chapter Four**

### **4.0 Methodology**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The present chapter focuses on research epistemologies and paradigms that have informed the selection of the research method used in this study. The data collection techniques used in the field include: in-depth face to face interviews , with open-ended question guidelines and the desk-top technique, during the use of the Internet to access more information about immigrants experiences from different parts of the world for comparison purposes.

Documents were also reviewed to establish the content learned by the immigrants. The population, sampling methods as well as a discussion on the validity and the reliability of the study and the limitations and delimitations of the study are also follow in this chapter.

#### **4.2 Epistemological approaches and Research Design**

This study is a qualitative study that is rooted in Phenomenology as forming the main epistemological stencil on which it is based. The present study is rooted in the socially constructed nature of reality as viewed by the researcher and the participants. Words rather than measures are the main focus of qualitative research in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2008). The qualitative approach aims to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives. In qualitative research the collection of data is done in a natural setting to the people under study, the data analysis is inductive and it establishes themes and patterns (Cresswell, 1998).

When doing qualitative research the researcher attempts to get as close to the participants in the study as possible (ibid). The intention with doing qualitative research is to understand the phenomena in its natural setting. Because the data in qualitative research is interpretive it is subjective rather than objective since it reflects the lived experiences of the researched. It is therefore imperative for the researcher to position her/himself within the study so as to admit the value – laden nature of the study. The researcher’s biases and values must be brought to light. Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to human experience (Mhlana, 2006).

Patton (2002), proposes that to employ qualitative methods in research allows issues to be dealt with and studied in depth and in detail. He further notes that phenomenology seeks to explore how human beings make sense of their experiences, “Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences...” (Patton 2002: 104). According to Patton the best way to understand and know how another person experiences a phenomena is to experience it directly ourselves.

This study borrows from Heuristic phenomenological approaches in order to highlight the experiences of the researcher and the women in this study. When defining heuristics Patton (2002), contends that it is a form of phenomenological inquiry that brings to light the experiences of the researcher. The researcher in this type of inquiry must have personal experience and interest in the phenomena under study.

Moreover Cresswell (2007), suggests that the type of problem best suited for phenomenological research is one where it is important to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon, The phenomenon in this case being the moving from one’s own country to a new country and trying to adapt to a new culture, find oneself once again and self-develop. Moreover heuristic inquiry maintains that the self of the researcher is present throughout the research process and while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge, Patton (2002), therefore I maintain that as an immigrant woman myself who has lived in Norway for more than five years I fulfill this proposition.

This study seeks to employ feminist approaches to data collection. Kvale (1996:72), notes that feminist approaches to qualitative research “have in common a focus on the everyday world of women, work with methods appropriate for understanding the very lives and situations of women, and understanding is a means for changing the conditions studied”. Moreover Cresswell (2007), notes that in feminist research approaches, research is collaborative and based on non-exploitative relationships between the researcher and the researched. Although Cresswell notes that feminist approaches aim at doing research that is transformative, the aim of this research however is to bring understanding to the social construction of women living in a foreign culture and how they make sense of the society in which they live in. According to Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002), feminist approaches must take into

consideration that knowledge is not separable from experience, what people do in their everyday life cannot be separable from the rest of their lives, it is vital therefore to bring out the experiences of women in order to get some understanding of how they construct their reality in the new culture.

I consider this approach therefore relevant in this particular study since the women in this study find themselves in social structures where they have a triple fold challenge, the fact that they are women, that they are immigrants and that they are African , as such this study attempts to “correct both the invisibility and distortion of (African immigrant) female experience in ways relevant to ending (African) women’s unequal social position” (Cresswell, 2007: 26), if only just by illuminating their experiences and interpretation of their reality in their words.

### **4.3 Case Study Research Methodological Approach**

For this study I chose to use a case study strategy where in- depth interviews were used to solicit the life histories of the participants. The triangulation and flexibility of methods was used to strengthen and validate the study. Robson, (2002) refers to case study as a strategy that involves an investigation of a phenomenon within its real context using multiple sources of evidence. Moreover Yin (2003), suggests that a case study as a research strategy is an all-embracing method which also covers data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis.

Robson (2002), notes that in a case study, a researcher may study a small number of individuals who have common features and Stake (1998), adds that the cases may be similar or they may be dissimilar, rather they are chosen because it is believed that understanding them may lead to a better understanding of the phenomena .According to Yin (2003), case study can be done on single or multiple case studies. In a single case study, the researcher is investigating just a single case where as with multiple-case studies two or more cases can be investigated in the same study.

Stake (2005), puts case studies into two category types, the intrinsic and instrumental interest categories. He posits that there are three types of case study within these two categories. He



defines intrinsic case study as the study that is undertaken because the researcher is interested in a particular case. The case here does not essentially represent other cases, but rather the case itself in its entirety is of interest. According to Stake when a case is investigated for the purposes of generalizing or to provide insight into an issue then the term instrumental case study is used. Here the case facilitates an understanding of something, although the case will be scrutinized extensively however this is just to help pursue external interest.

The third type of case study that is of interest to this research is the multiple case study. This is an instrumental study which has been extended to several cases (ibid). The multiple cases are chosen and are studied in order to examine a phenomenon. The participants in this study were chosen in order to examine their experiences in the adaptation to a new culture linking this to their former experiences in the original culture. This will lead to an understanding of their world is constructed.

In using in-depth interviews that bring out life histories to gather data the aim is to get the participants to tell their stories as this according to Marshall and Rossman, (2006), helps to understand and create a self a fact which I consider important for the participants in this study. The two researchers assert that life histories examine how individuals construct their social world (ibid).

...The life history is often an account of how an individual enters a group and becomes socialized into it. The history includes learning to meet the normative expectations of that society by gender, social class or age peers. Life histories emphasize the experience of the individual- how the person copes with the society rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals (Marshall and Rossman, 2006:116)

Therefore I argue that conducting my interviews whilst soliciting life histories from the participants is an advantage in this study.

## **4.4 Data Collection and Procedure**

### **4.4.1 Interview Method**

In-depth interviews were used to solicit the perspectives and experiences of the participants. Kvale (1996) observes that interviews attempt to understand the world from the point of view of the participants. To understand their lived experiences it is best to talk to them and have

them tell their life story in their own words. When doing interviews the focus is on the interviewee's point of view (Bryman 2008). Interviews give insight to what the participant views as being important and relevant. The researcher on the other hand is looking for rich and detailed information.

The in-depth interviews used in this study were guided by the feminist interview situation ethic as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1998). According to these researchers this ethic transforms interviewers and respondents into co-equals who are having a conversation about mutually relevant and biographically critical issues. The interview therefore becomes personalized and the issues discussed affect both the researcher and the participant.

To be able to achieve to source out the rich information that I needed and to be able to validate my study I interviewed the women twice on two different occasions. Follow up questions and clarifications were done over the telephone to save time as most of the women were either working, with small children or busy with school. The interviews were done in four different languages, English, Ndebele, Shona and Norwegian and they were translated to English on transcription. My knowledge of the four languages proved an asset for me as there was no need at any given time for translation during the interviews.

#### **4.4.2 Audio recording of interviews**

The interviews in this study were recorded on a recorder with the consent of the participants. While recording, I was also making some detailed field notes on expressions and the atmosphere of the settings where the interviews were taking place which the recorder could not capture. I transcribed the recorded interviews as soon as I got home to avoid the daunting task of trying to transcribe many interviews all at once. Using the recorder helped me to save time as it would have taken me a long time to scribble all the information on the paper, moreover Bryman (2008) notes that to use audio recording when interviewing also helps in correcting mistakes that would otherwise be made were our memories to be relied upon and that the recorded interview helps to open up the data to public scrutiny by other researchers who would be interested in the analysis of our research.

#### **4.4.3 The interview guide**

In qualitative research the researcher is considered as the instrument of research. It is therefore important for a researcher to be well prepared on how she /he will go about gathering data. The interview guide is an integral aspect of the process of gathering data in qualitative research. The questions that are used by the researcher to probe and generate data for the research must be carefully planned and well developed.

For this particular study I used face to face in-depth interviews of 60-90 minutes each which were done on two separate days. Thus for the 10 participants I had two separate interview guides, the interview guide for the first interview was concentrating on two research questions

1. How do African women describe their early experiences in their country of origin and later in Norway?
2. How do culture and early socialization and schooling influence immigrant women's adaptation and how have their learning experiences contributed to their socio-cultural, economic or cultural adaptation?

Thus the questions were rooted on the core –question about experiences in the home country however I developed some probes in anticipation of some answers

The interview guide for the second interview stemmed from these two research questions

1. What formal and informal language –learning activities have the immigrant women participated in since coming to Norway?
2. What are the challenges faced by African immigrant women in the endeavor to adapt to the Norwegian culture and what strategies do African women use to manage expectations of their host culture in order to meet their goals of personal development

The third interview guide was developed for the Norwegian language teachers with questions rooted on the content and to solicit their views and opinions on the content they teach, and it comprised of only six items.

#### **4.4.4 Documentary Review**

Relevant documents on the curriculum and the textbooks used for the teaching of language were examined from Rosenhof Language School. Documents regarding the education policy to adult immigrants, documents from the Norwegian statistics bureau and some practice exercise papers that are given to language students and reports written by language teachers were also examined. Silverman (2004), notes that documentary materials are data, which often reflects a documentary version of social reality. The library at the University of Oslo and other libraries around Oslo were used extensively. According to Kurabai (2008), the use of secondary data allows researchers to study interesting questions which would not be studied in any other way.

### **4.5 Selection of site, Population, and Sampling technique**

#### **4.5.1 Selection of Site**

For the purposes of this study, Oslo was chosen as the site of the sample selection. Oslo being the capital city of Norway and as mentioned in the problem statement that immigrants in Norway are concentrated in Oslo and that 25% of the population living in Oslo are immigrants, it is therefore home to various African groups. Oslo was therefore selected for its feasibility and appropriacy for the investigation of the research problem (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995). Although in the beginning I had intended to interview participants living in the different cities in Norway, limited resources and the time constraint prevented me from pursuing this line of action.

#### **4.5.2 Population**

The population can be defined as the universe unit from which the sample is to be selected (Bryman, 2004). The targeted population in this research were the African immigrant women who had lived in Oslo for more than five years and had settled permanently in Norway with no intention of resettling to another country in the near future.

### **4.5.3 Sample Selection.**

For this study I was interested in women immigrants from Africa who had immigrated to Norway as adults. The women were supposed to have taken some form of education and worked in their countries prior to immigrating to Norway and they continued with self development after moving to Norway. Initially I had intended to interview both groups of participants who had attended Norwegian classes and those who had not in order to compare how their adaptation and self development had been influenced by their knowledge of the language but I later changed this as it emerged that all the participants in my sample had actually attended classes albeit for different lengths of time.

A sample refers to a group of people or unit of analysis selected for study. Purposeful sampling is a non-probability sampling technique which was employed in this study in an effort to find a sample that would be as representative as possible of the women from Africa who live in Oslo and who would also be accessible to me as I needed them for the interviews. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select participants or study areas for the reason that they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem (Cresswell, (1998).

Patton (2002), contends that the logic behind purposeful sampling is that it provides the research with information rich cases for in-depth study. He further notes that information rich cases provide insights and in-depth understanding of the phenomena at hand. However as my acquaintance to participants from as many African countries as possible to securing a representative sample was limited, I thus resorted to snowball sampling.

Patton (2002), defines snowball sampling as the sample that increases as interviews occur and recommendations are made by connections on who to talk to, to get information. Taking into consideration that the African female immigrants are not culturally a homogenous group but rather representative of a range of diverse cultures and thus their experiences, their acquisition of new knowledge and their adaptation processes differ according to their different cultural backgrounds. To cater for these cultural differences at first I had intended to interview a total of two participants per country from as many countries as I possibly could get but this proved difficult as most of the participants who had promised to participate became very busy and

were no longer available. Thus I had to limit myself to one participant from each of the 8 countries identified as willing to participate in this study except for two countries whose participants were willing to go all the way. I chose the sample that would best represent the population of the women living in Oslo given the constraints at hand.

Although the cultures in Africa are similar in many ways there are however marked differences. I therefore resorted to investigating the experiences from women from Anglophone Africa, as doing it otherwise would entail research of a wider scale than the masters' level would allow. In addition to the ten women participants, two language teachers from Rosenhof and Folk Universitet were interviewed to shed light on the teachers experience in teaching language to African women and to share their views on the content that they teach to these women.

#### **4.6 Validity and reliability**

In qualitative research the researcher is the instrument of research and therefore the report must include some information about the researcher (Patton, 2002). As I am part of the researched phenomena in this study I have tried to clarify my biases and prejudices right from the onset. Kvale (1996), notes that it is important for a researcher to come out in the open about past experiences, biases and prejudices in order for the reader to understand the researcher's position. The data in this study has been analyzed based on a triangulated theoretical approach.

According to Patton (2002), the point of theory triangulation is to understand how different assumptions and premises affect findings and interpretations. The findings in this research may be considered valid since there was no instrument interjected between the researcher and the researched and the use of triangulation of theories in the analysis may be seen as thus validating the study.

Since this study entails the experiences of women in their original culture and in the new environment and how they have developed themselves told and reported in their own words, it can be said that the study is reliable as it is most likely that should another researcher make the same investigation the stories would not change.

## **4.7 Limitations and delimitations of the study**

The interview method however in-depth the interviews are is not without its limitations, for the mere reason that the experiences described by the participants are personal they can be prone to bias. The information that is obtained from the participants is difficult to verify and the interviews are time consuming. The interviews also pry into private lives of interviewees and they might end up unwilling to divulge certain information (Kemuma, 2000).

In this study the representative sample for the whole population of African women living in Oslo would have been very large and difficult to gather given the time and resources constraint as mentioned earlier, thus I limited myself to just investigating eight African countries. The interviews from Cameroon are from the participant coming from the English speaking part of the country. The study would be more interesting should all the countries represented in Norway including Muslim countries like Somali and Morocco had been included. A study like that would require more time and more resources.

## **4.8 Ethical considerations**

It goes without saying that when conducting research, ethical issues must be taken into consideration. In qualitative research face to face interactions occur between the interviewer and the interviewee and thus the research process becomes personal. This research aimed to gain insights into experiences of African women immigrants and therefore it is an undeniable fact that it will delve deep into their private lives. It was therefore important to maintain a balance between wanting to know and the right to privacy. This was done by way of consent paper. Bryman (2008), suggests that a consent paper forms the outlines of the purposes of the research and its background, it can also clarify that participation is voluntary and that the interviewee has a right to withdraw at anytime.

I endeavored to assure the participants of their privacy during interviews, participants were promised access to the finished findings for those who will be interested. Permission to conduct research was sought through relevant authorities (see appendix 4). Pseudonyms were

used in the analysis of data where the informant number as appearing in the sample table was given a pseudo-name randomly to avoid that the participants could be traceable by country.

## **4.9 Data Analysis**

Audio-taped individual interviews were listened to several times and then I transcribed them verbatim. I also went through the transcribed material again several times in order to identify key concepts and emerging themes. I also made some notes (coding) and summarized some statements. Merrill, (2009), posits that coding helps to make sense of data. As I was guided by feminist perspectives in this research, I had a lot of data which I had to clean up.

This presented me with a challenge as I considered all the things the women said as being very important and relevant in the interpretation of their reality. Therefore I used the interview guide as an analytical framework to report the findings using the research questions to analyze the data, identify repeating themes, commonalities, patterns and differences.

Although I desired to report the stories case by case I had to drop this line of thought as the findings chapter would have been too long. So I did a cross case analysis as recommended by Stake (2005). I tried therefore to use the words that were used by the participants in the interviews as much as possible. I organized the data collectively according to shared experiences and then tried to relate to my theoretical framework and the literature review to explain and make sense of the themes that emerged.



## Chapter Five

### 5.0 Data Presentation

#### 5.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents the findings of the study in the form of the experiences of the women who were interviewed. This chapter is divided into sections according to the research questions posed; the participants are not mentioned by name in order to protect their privacy therefore pseudo-names have been used; the names have been allocated randomly. The ages of the participants in this study range from 30 to 55 years old as illustrated in the table representing the sample. All of the participants are married and have children except one. 50 % of the participants are married to men from their original countries and the other 50% are married to Norwegian men, a factor which will appear influential in the adaptation processes of the women and in their language learning.

**Table 2: Table representing the sample of the study**

Participant no	Country Of origin	No of years in Norway	Age Range
Participant 1	South Africa	10	45-50
Participant 2	Zimbabwe	5	35-40
Participant 3	Zimbabwe	10	30-35
Participant 4	Zambia	8	30-35
Participant 5	Zambia	10	35-40
Participant 6	Ghana	17	40-45
Participant 7	Cameroon	12	30-35
Participant 8	Ethiopia	10	35-40
Participant 9	Kenya	12	35-40
Participant 10	Tanzania	10	35-40
Teacher 1/ Male	Norway	-	-
Teacher 2/ Female	Norway	-	-

## **5.2 Reasons for migration and the impact on adaptation**

According to Mahalingam (2006), the reason for migrating to another culture has a lot to do with how the woman immigrant adapts to that culture. The participants in this study had moved to Norway for different reason, some had migrated for study purposes and later on changed their minds and decided to settle permanently, a few had moved to Norway to rejoin their spouses who were either studying, working or Norwegian citizens and others had moved to Norway to seek for asylum.

In my study I met with three groups of participants, one group migrated to Norway to study and then they decided to settle permanently, the other group moved to Norway for reasons of family reunion to join their spouses who were either studying, had got a job or were Norwegian citizens and the third group did not wish to divulge the reason for migrating to Norway. In the section below I briefly present the participants and their reason for migrating to Norway.

Jill moved to Norway to continue her higher education, she comments that her moving was in good timing as the economic situation in her country was collapsing and everybody was on their way out of the country so she was grateful and very happy for the opportunity to come to Norway. Her husband joined her a few months later for family re-unification; her husband comes from the same country.

Emelda migrated to Norway as a spouse, when she came to Norway she had nothing to do she had college education and was eager to get university education, this motivated her to take up language lessons as soon as possible, and then she went to university for a bachelor degree and thereafter a master degree, she is married to a man from her country.

Zinzi migrated to Norway to study for a bachelor degree. She later on met her husband and decided to settle permanently. She then took up her masters' degree and she continues with research. She has taken language education on and off and has not taken examinations in any level, however she continues to study the language at home alone through the Internet.

Eustina and Star migrated for the purposes of studying while Eustina is still studying Star decided to settle in Norway with her family and is in the process of working towards her PhD. Eustina reports that she did not attend the Norwegian lessons in the beginning because she could not afford to pay for her tuition since she was not eligible for state funding in language, so it was difficult for her to finance herself and also the other reason why she took her time was that she was not sure whether she would settle in Norway or go back to her country, that is why she is doing Norwegian language in the early stages.

Frida migrated to Norway to rejoin her husband a Norwegian man whom she had met in her country. She is quick to mention that she did not want to move to Norway and she found it very difficult in the beginning. Frida reports that she had her career going well back in her country when her husband 'uprooted' her and she had to come to Norway, she had a good job in her country and had been offered a leadership position. She comments that she felt out of place and had to go back to her country for a while because she could not cope at all in the beginning. When she made the decision to come back to Norway, she immediately started her language course because she had made up her mind that she wanted to develop herself and take up higher education.

Mono migrated to Norway for the reason of rejoining her husband who had come to study and later got a job. She reports that it was very difficult for her to get used to the Norwegian culture, she still struggles with it but she is trying to adapt, she says. She reports that she did not feel motivated to do the language course because she did not feel that it would help her to get a better job, because she had seen that even those who had attained the language education were still struggling doing cleaning jobs, so she felt discouraged. She reports that it took time for her to feel that she should take the language course. She also reports that she was not sure that she and her family would settle permanently in Norway. After many years she however decided to begin the language course at the same time as she was taking a degree at a local university. She is thus doing her second level of the Norwegian language for immigrants.

Daisy first came to Norway to visit a relative then she later migrated to Norway after having met her husband during that visit. According to her, she did not prioritize learning the language, after realizing that life in Norway was expensive she stopped going to Norwegian classes after only six weeks of class, preferring to work in order to be able to support herself and to send money to her parents back home, she learnt her Norwegian language out of school and is very fluent in it.

Barbara and Olana did not wish to disclose their reasons for moving to Norway but they both studied language as soon as they arrived in Norway. When these two moved to Norway they were certain of the fact that they had come to settle permanently, so the question about whether or not to study the language was not an issue. They understood from the onset according to what they say that they had to learn the language before they could get jobs. Since they had the type of permit which qualified them for state funding in their language courses they studied. However like Daisy, Olana stopped her lessons after four months when she realized she needed more income to support herself. Both took higher education and obtained degrees, Olana is still working with her education. She is married to a man from her native country. Barbara is married to a Norwegian man whom she met in Norway and is halfway towards finishing her Master degree.

### **5.3 Early informal learning experiences and their impact in the adaptation processes in the new culture**

To bring forth the question of how early socialization impacts the adaptation of individuals in a new culture the participants were asked to describe their early learning experiences from childhood within their home environment as well as in the community where they grew up and how they view these experiences as having had some impact in their adaptation in the Norwegian culture whether positively or negatively.

Most women shared similar experiences on how they had been brought up; all the women expressed respect of the elders as being a very important value, which was emphasized and they were taught when they were growing up. Obedience was a value that was expected of most of the participants by their parents. As a child one was not supposed to answer back even though they knew they were right. That a child does not answer back when a parent is reprimanding them signifies respect in the African culture. All the women expressed that it was considered important to greet one's elders all the time. As the younger one you were not supposed to address people older than you by name, as one interviewee, Star mentioned,

...where I grew up we were taught to greet our elders it is considered disrespectful to expect to be greeted by someone older than you. We were taught to address our elders by their title or by referring to them as brother or sister so and so. When I came to Norway I found it so strange that people were calling older people by their names, it took me a long time to get used to the idea, and the people here they don't greet! Even the Africans living here do not greet you, I have also learnt not to greet, I just keep quiet and mind my own business.

Frida agrees with this by adding,

....respect was much emphasized in my family, we were supposed to greet in the morning, in the afternoon and when you are coming from school you should learn to say good afternoon, good evening. We also learnt that when there is a visitor at our home we were supposed to kneel down and clap hands to greet older people according to our culture and not just to greet people standing. We also used to go to church where we were taught respect.

Mono points out that in her family respect were also held highly as an important value to teach children. She mentions that she learnt at an early age that she had to fight to succeed; things just did not come easy you had to fight for them and work hard, but it was important to respect others in the process. She narrates,

...I grew up on a farm and it was a big family of nine, five girls and four boys. My mother was a teacher and my father was a politician and a farmer. There are a lot of things I learnt as I grew up, to respect people, to be honest with yourself as well as other people, and to be true to whom you are. My parents always said you don't have to pretend, just be yourself, we also learnt to fight in life to get what you want.

In agreement with Mono, Daisy also remarks on the fighting spirit and the need to remain true to oneself and work hard

..in my family we learnt to survive no matter where you are, no matter the situation you can still hold your head high and still succeed, there is no limitation. It is just about working hard to get whatever you want and you can get it, I learnt that money is not everything you need to bring up your children wherever you are, you can still be happy and appreciate the little you have and do the best and make the most of what you have and what is available.

Eight out of the ten women expressed that they had been socialized to the hard work ethic and were also taught to appreciate what they got. Only two of the participants had been brought up in a household where there was a housemaid. However all the participants reported that they were expected to help with work in the fields, to fetch water for those who lived in the country, to cook and to clean the house. Some had even helped to take care of their siblings while the adults were out working. The participants expressed that they had been taught to be responsible at a very early age. Star appreciates the hard work ethic that was instilled in her. She recalls,

....basically the upbringing in the rural areas as you know is a hard life. In that I learnt that it is good to grow up very hard. It is important to teach children hard work, you learn not to take things for granted, you cannot have things handed to you on a silver platter, you have to work for them, you can see how hard I work here if I had not been trained I would not be able to work in this country where my education cannot even count, can you imagine! Our upbringing is different from the present generation because we were brought up in strict rules. There is a structured way of doing things. So we followed that at this time you do your homework. It was a routine that is not questionable because the children today they ask why, why? There is always why but we did not ask why if the parents say this you have to follow the program.

Jill recalls her experiences regarding the hard work training,

....at home we learnt a lot as well, our mother made sure that we learn how it is to live in the country. We were not protected because we lived most of the time in town she taught us everything that had to be learnt; we learnt how to work and to cultivate in the fields. We were supposed to learn the work regardless of what you were studying to be, my brother was studying to be a doctor but my mother just made him cultivate the fields just like the rest of us.

The community spirit emerged as being a dominant feature of the participants' experiences. All of them mentioned the importance of sticking together as a community, this defined who they are and all of them expressed that they missed this and had difficulties in adapting to a culture that does not put that much emphasis on community spirit. One participant Emelda commented,

....every time I hear that someone is dead even if they are Norwegian I feel the need to gather all my friends so that we can all go there and support the bereaved family. This is what I am used to; when someone dies in my community we go there in our numbers uninvited to sing and dance to relieve the pain of the loss of a loved one. We offer our support one hundred percent, we work there, we offer food and we are there for each other. Here in Norway everyone minds their own business; they cry alone behind closed doors, it's so strange! But then I understand that we have different cultures.

On the community spirit Jill remarks,

....we used to live with a lot of extended family and we were all given the same amount of work. We learnt the community spirit a lot. I remember we used to help each other as a community, to work collectively for a particular family and they would also come to work at our home when invited. We made sure that when such an occasion arose our family would be represented so as to contribute that way, so we got the exposure to that kind of life. We learnt that community spirit was important. When there is a member of a community who has passed away we used to go there. We learnt very early to be supportive of our community members, during the time of grief.

For Jill, the value of the community spirit will always be an important part of her even after living in Norway for so long, she is still attached to that community spirit which she grew up in and she misses it. She reflects,

....the things that I would say have stayed with me to date from the way I was brought up, I am in a society that does not think community, but I find myself always thinking community because that's the way I was brought up. Sometimes when I hear that someone I know lost a relative I always feel that we should collectively go there and sing songs and comfort the bereaved, but it does not work that way here. So these values that I grew up with are difficult to shed. To support the extended family is also a value that will stay with me. My father used to go back home to the community to pick up people who wanted to look for work in town and we would always be many in the small house we lived in if someone became ill in the village he would just go to the country and pick them up to take them to the hospital. So we grew up with strong values with regards to the community spirit.

In addition some of the participants expressed that they found it strange that in Norway one can be a neighbor to someone and not necessarily become friends with them, but again some liked this about the Norwegian culture expressing that it is sometimes good that the neighbor minds their own business.

Eustina who comes from a very traditional community that is holding on to the old values of their culture had this to say about her community and the things she experienced when growing up in her community. She reported,

....my community is a very educative community and its like they are really satisfied with their way of life, that is why they don't see the importance of other education. In their perspectives they have a set up of life that is theirs, whatever their qualities and values which are very strong, the old people teach young people and the young people have their groups according to age and the groups depend on each other. So we learn skills how to handle things, we are from a very strong society and so when you don't have a group to depend on skills wise, I mean in every way, this group means everything to you then you are going to be lost without it. Even the women have their groups, as well as the men they have their groups. The young men also have their own groups according to different ages. They are warriors; they go alone into the interior of the bush and learn how to fight lions.

Within the aspects of the community spirit, the participants pointed out that they grew up in an environment where they were taught that a child belongs to every parent. So when they were growing up they could be disciplined by any adult, it did not matter that a person who saw you being naughty was your parent or not, according to their values a child belongs to everybody. It is every adult's duty to raise a child therefore correcting children should not just be left to the parents but to everybody in the community and as far as this is concerned the women therefore had experienced challenges in raising their own children alone as there were no aunts or uncles here in Norway where they could send the children to if there was a problem. Emelda was confused because she did not know what to do with her teenage children when they were disobedient because she was not allowed to discipline them the way she thought was best,

...the system does not allow it, if you discipline them and they report you or the neighbor reports you, they take them away from you and it's a challenge because we know that you can beat your child to discipline them, it does not mean that you hate them, they say its abuse but how can I abuse my child? I don't understand, my father beat me up when I was naughty it was not a problem. I never went around thinking my father was abusing me, it actually made me turn out fine because I could not do bad things since I was afraid of my father.

Barbara, comments on the community spirit and adds that hospitality was also an important value that she was taught when growing up. It was important not to think of oneself before the others, the spirit of sharing was highly regarded when you have a visitor, even though the visitor turns up unannounced and you do not have enough food for all of you in the family, you had to go to great lengths to see that they are comfortable. She recalls an experience where she offered some foodstuff from her home to a neighbor here in Norway and was shocked when she was asked how much she expected for it. All of the participants consider it impolite to refuse help or hospitality from someone and most of them mention that this puts them in an awkward position when they are being offered something in the Norwegian setting whether to accept or refuse and most mentioned that they are often offended when they offer someone help and the person refuses. One participant remarked,

...I have even stopped offering my place in the bus for the old people, you do not know how they will respond, if they refuse, which has happened many times, I become embarrassed, so to avoid that I just don't offer my place, but this is contradictory to what I was taught as a child so I feel bad the whole trip.



Most of the participants remarked about the Norwegians being quiet and reserved one participant said, “Sometimes I don’t know what to say, you have to be careful what to say otherwise you embarrass people, it’s a problem for me to have to think through how to phrase my words first, I must try and think how would a Norwegian see this, I consider this stressful, in my culture we are more open I think, it’s not a problem to interact with each other, so here I had to learn to hold my openness in check.”

Most of the participants in this study spent part of their lives in the rural areas and later on moved to the cities for their education. In the cities they met people from different parts of their different countries who had different cultures and got that exposure. Most of them see this as an advantage as they experienced both worlds and they learnt different values and survival skills from both worlds and they therefore see themselves as being well equipped to deal with different situations and different cultures.

According to Eustina growing up in both worlds taught her a lot about different cultures. She attended her primary school in the city and then moved to the capital city for her secondary education where she met people not only from different other cities but from other countries as well. Jill attained her education in the city but during holidays she would spend all her time in the rural areas. She learnt a different language from her mother tongue at a very young age and this gave her exposure to other cultures as well. So when she later moved to Norway she had an idea about how to handle the situation where she had to meet people with different values and a different value from hers. It was not entirely a new experience.

For most of these women religious values played a major role in their upbringing, just one third of the women did not bring up the issue of religion. The majority of them had been brought up in religious families where religious values were highly regarded.

One of the women, Zinzi reflects on the things she has learnt from her country from the perspective of a woman in exile. She remarks that living in a foreign culture makes one appreciate one’s culture and one’s way of being and this makes her proud. These are her remarks,

.... you would say that exile is ... I mean this is an exile in a way... and exile is said to be kind of... has this creative imagination in a person ...it kind of gives you more opportunity to think and question things in a way that you are not used if you were back home... but that's because when you are back home you don't look back to see through everything you have gone through... even the tiny small things, but when you are far away from home and you are not experiencing that life you look at it from a very far away position and then every bit of experience becomes important and it actually shapes who you are. I always say the first 14 years in my parents' house are very important because they shaped the person I am today, my way of looking at life I enjoy life while I appreciate that there are some people who don't have the same kind of life so then it means I have to cherish- not just enjoy it.

#### **5.4 Early formal educational experiences and their impact in the adaptation in the new culture**

The participants were then asked to describe their learning experiences in a formal environment, which is at the schools they attended from the primary school up to college. All of the participants attended primary school, high school and college and a few of the participants had gone further to university level and had worked for a while prior to coming to Norway.

In the discussion concerning their experiences at school, all of the participants in this study had studied in schools based on the British model, the education they received was behavioral and through memorization and rote learning. Again obedience, respect and authority were highly emphasized values.

Most participants began school at the ages of 6-7 years old, of all the participants only Emelda reports that she started school late because her parents failed to agree whether she should go to school or not as her mother needed her to help in the house, so she began late, at 8 years old. School was highly selective and competitive. From the first grade they were to fight for positions in performance, it was very important to take the first position. Most of them tell that they were beaten to solicit best performance from them, one of the participants Star who has a Masters degree in education defined the education she took as being like a banking system education where the teachers were the knower and the children were to be spoon fed.

Jill reports this about her experiences,

..we were expected to learn and to pass very well , the education system in (.....) is such that you work on results and there is a lot of pressure so people are expected to pass very well. You don't just go to school, you have to work to pass and to work for positions. At my school there was a lot of competition and we were given positions according to how we performed. You would take position 1 or 2 and so we worked very hard for that. in the first 3 years I was not taking number 1 but from grade 3 onwards then I began to take number 1, yes up to grade 7 I had a good name. At the school I went to, the headmaster was very results oriented so we used to get prizes. Positions 1-4 would get prizes but what he would do to motivate us was that every year he would take the previous year prize winners, put them up there ( to the front ) and he would call the new prize winners, so if this old prize winner was being displaced, he would call the name of the old prize winner and the new one, so people worked hard to retain their positions and the pressure was high, but this helped us to work very hard indeed because it was nice to get the prize every year.

Her thoughts are echoed by another participant Emelda, who also has achieved a university education at masters' level. She remarks,

...The way we learned was kind of passive learning regardless of girl or a boy. We had to memorize everything and put it in our heads and then reproduce it and get a good grade. It was the teacher who in what is called the banking type of education who talked and asked questions, you could not say anything. So I thought we were seen as empty slates waiting to be spoon-fed. The other things that we were going through at home, like that a girl had to help the mother to fetch water, clean the house and other things, we girls it was our job to keep the classrooms clean.

Mono had this to contribute about the authoritarian system of education in her country,

...The teachers were very strict compared to now. We were supposed to follow rules, you were not supposed to be late, and you had to comb your hair. You had to attend morning inspection, like in the military. I did not realize it then but now if I look back it was so stressful because you were so scared of teachers all the time, they were like little gods. And at school I think it was too much you would clean the toilets, the classroom, gardening and cutting the grass because we didn't have school general workers, so every week there was one hour set aside for that. At some point we would cook and clean for our teachers at their houses. It is very different with Norwegian school life.

Daisy recalls that,

....We were given lots of exams and we used to read a lot and there was a lot of competition, we were given grades and the best would get prizes for appreciation and if you don't do so well we always got some extra tuition to help come up with grades.

Most of the participants in this study had to travel to places far from home to get their secondary education, either at the boarding school or in the city. According to the participants this was a time to learn to be an adult, to take care of oneself without the parents being close, to learn to be responsible and to be independent. However the education system at secondary

school level emphasized studying for exams as well and there was a lot of competition and pressure for the students.

Star reports that she feels that the type education she received at her secondary school actually instilled in her the discipline that has shaped her attitude towards studying. She reflects that the values regarding studying which she acquired then still work for her. She comments,

...I think the most important thing which they instilled in us is responsibility and discipline because when they say go and do your homework, the following day they want it. That is the way of instilling responsibility that you should grow up being a responsible and disciplined person. From that period I took that and it is that what is helping me even today, that if I start to study I have to read. To achieve something you have to work very hard for it, you cannot just get something in a plate; you have to work for it. I think I had a better education which made me to be responsible and to be able to study, in my country we had education which made us study to pass in Norway all of them just go to the next grade without passing.

Although Mono observes that she felt that the methods that were used by the teachers were behaviorist oriented and too much based on corporal punishment, she thinks that the value that she learnt there was that she can do better in anything if she put more effort. She remarks that she feels that there is nothing that can be too difficult if one puts more effort to it. She reports that although she did not like mathematics and was forced to learn it by memorizing the concepts, she did manage to pass the exams and continued with her education. She added,

.... it was forced learning, so when you fail they will beat you. As for me I was not good in mathematics, they would beat me, so there you just had to learn, because it was forced and it was hard to learn, it was not about what you like or what you are interested in or good at, it was different, you just had to work hard and do your best, there were not many options. We were supposed to be neat, clean clothes, short nails nicely maintained hair and we were supposed to be punctual and if you do not conform with the rules you would be punished, if you made noise in class you would be punished, compared to here we were very disciplined I have never heard that a child is punished if they are disobedient, that is why they have such serious disciplinary problems in schools.

All the participants interviewed feel that the education they got in their home country provided them with a solid background to tackle further studies in the future. They all come from a system which emphasizes the importance of educational achievement and so they all had a wish to continue improving their educational attainment. Barbara reports that the experience of serving in the national service from her country actually taught her not to put herself in the front but to think of others first before oneself. She tells that this value has

remained with her through all her life and even in the new culture, so this has come in handy in the nursing profession which she started in her country and pursued in the new culture.

## **5.5 Work experiences in the country of origin**

Of all the participants interviewed for this study only one participant did not work in professional employment. Olana helped in the family business and before she could find employment she migrated to Norway, thus she does not have many experiences in the work environment. Jill who already had finished a masters degree in her country worked first as a teacher then she got a job as a researcher in a scientific institution, she enjoyed her job ,but she still wanted to continue with her education and so she moved to Norway to study for her PhD.

Eustina had a leadership position in a profession which was male dominated, when she finished her bachelor degree in her country, she struggled to get a job at a place where she wished ,and when it finally happened, she met many challenges to be accepted because of her age and gender. She had to work extra hard to prove herself and achieved many improvements at her place of work. She learnt how to fight for her position as a woman and she stood by her word and delivered the work she was doing and exceeded expectations thus she was accepted.

Frida also had a managerial position in a high profile business in her country. She was an upcoming executive and her carrier was successful, she worked in public relations and was in contact with people from all over the world. She remarks that her work gave her self-confidence and she was very proud and satisfied with the direction her carrier was taking. She also has a private business which was doing very well beside her job and during the weekends she would run errands for her business. These experiences equipped her to be able to relate with people.

Mono, Eustina and Star, who were all teachers in their countries, had positive experiences in their countries and they were rising up the ladder to leadership position and were respected members of the communities. Eustina was promoted to a leadership position in her school and

she feels that she contributed a lot in changing the system of running things in her school with regards to how students were treated.

## **5.6 Motivating factors to take further education**

One of the themes that emerged during the interviews was the emergence of the significant other in the lives of the participants'. This is the person who was the motivating force in the participants taking further education in adulthood or the motivation to work very hard when they were young. In some instances it was the parents, either the father or the mother who felt that it was important for their child to get some education in order to break away from the life style they were living. School was seen as a means to a better life in the future, this comment from Jill shows this fact,

....for me as a person it was very important (to get an education) and that is what my father wanted. My father always wanted us to pass and go to university he told us that he was not able to go himself but we were to do it. He wanted to make a difference for his children he wanted his children to pass; he did not want us to be poor in life. That is a value which he always emphasized on. My motivation came from home. I also set new goals for myself, and also motivation from the others who were ahead of me. I would see young lecturers achieve their doctorates, our lecturers some of them were very young and I thought why not, I could also do the same so I would have a goal.

Eustina comments that her mother was her role model, although she (the mother) was not an educated woman, she was very strong and was able to take care of Eustina and her siblings without the father because of family misunderstandings earlier on in life. She understood the value of education and she also took up some education when she was an adult. Her mother learnt to read and write. Eustina felt very proud of that fact and she feels that she has had a lot to learn from her mother and she doubts if she is as strong as her mother.

Star tells that in the beginning it was her father who had been the motivating force for her to get a professional qualification, but however later on, she made a decision herself to continue with her education because she felt she had the responsibility to develop herself, since she found herself as a single mother due to tragic circumstances in her life. She had therefore to take care of her child on her own. She describes vividly the experiences leading to her acquisition of a bachelor degree and then later a master's degree in her country. She recalls,

... and then I had to go to school again and this time it was no longer my parents pushing me, it was me who wanted to study so I took these two years to do my (Further studies towards a bachelor degree from her country) ... and after that then I started to apply for teaching jobs and by then I had a profession, so I got a school and I continued with my teaching. It was also my decision to go to the university (.....) My child was two years old and I studied and made it .I was working hard, from work I would go to the university and my child would be home, (laughter..) a two year old.... and I had to hire somebody who had to take care of him, and I made it I got my junior degree.... and I was so happy to get that.... But I said I am not going to end there so I went to the university ..... And I did my honors degree before my master's degree.

Like Star, Daisy had her father as the motivator in her education; she reports that her father believed that to be somebody in her country, one had to take school seriously. She says that she and her siblings were therefore encouraged to go to school so as to make it in life,

..... I wanted to be somebody, my dad said always you must read and take your school work seriously, you have an opportunity to study there are many who did not have that opportunity who wanted it, so you must make use of it. Education is very important and no matter how old you are you will need it and you will still use it and you will appreciate and try and do something, so that drove us to work hard.

Frida's motivation also came from the fact that as a single mother, getting further education would enable her to get a good job and a better life. As the eldest daughter in her family she was expected to help raise the family, since the passing away of their father. So she continued to study at night whilst she was working during the day. She comments,

.....I had the responsibility of raising my son and I also had to help my mother to raise my three younger siblings, so I had to have a better qualification to be able to get a better job so I continued to study.

Emelda always admired an uncle's wife who was a nurse, she tells that this aunt had a very good life and she looked very happy. She always looked at this aunt and wanted to be like her, the way the aunt was bringing up her children was something that Emelda admired. She comments that she always felt that the aunt's children had a better life than the life which she and her siblings had, so she felt that she had to do the same for her children, thus she made up her mind that she would do the same, get an education and a better life when she got the opportunity.

## 5.7 Definition of gender roles in the original and the new cultures

The family, as a social institution, is a *brewery* for patriarchal practices in the African culture. In most African cultures, from a tender age, the socialization process differentiates the girl child from the boy child. Males are socialized to view themselves as breadwinners and heads of households whilst females are taught to be obedient and submissive housekeepers. The participants in the study were asked to describe their experiences on gender roles in their original cultures and in their new culture and share how they have managed the transition. Most expressed that when they were growing up the gender roles in the family, the community and even at the work place were clearly defined and pronounced. Emelda had this to say,

.....I was brought up to view a woman as a bringer of happiness, my duty as a woman was to clean the house, take care of my brothers and sisters and cook food for everybody. When I grew up I was trained to be a caretaker of the home, so I was socialized to learn how to cook in the absence of my mother.

Even up to this day in an egalitarian culture that encourages the fair division of duties in the home, it is a problem for Emelda to adapt into the new way of doing things. She notes that when she sees her husband doing house duties she feels guilty and instinctively takes over and does it herself. When asked about the division of gender roles in the Norwegian home Emelda notes that she finds it hard to adjust to. She is married to a man from her country who expects her to do everything in the house and she does it without questioning it.

According to Emelda women are to do certain things and a man has his own duties in the house. That is the order of things, she reports that there are things that she cannot do but her husband can do them that is how it should be. Emelda reports that because she was a girl her going to school was not prioritized, her mother did not want her to go to school in the beginning because she was going to have a baby. Emelda had to stay at home and help to take care of the baby. She reflects,

..... I am still finding problems to adapt, what I believed is still sitting at the back of my mind even though unconsciously, but consciously I think I have some negative and positive adaptations too. My view of a woman has somehow changed from that time, I saw a woman as a house keeper, a bringer of happiness, who gathers her own happiness and her own well being, so I saw a woman as one who could only bring peace and stability at home.... and to please her husband and a woman's role, was limited to the kitchen and the household activities and even now here in Norway I still do more of the house activities and I get some help from the girls and to admit it's very strange to sit down while my husband is cooking.



One of the participants reports that she grew up in a polygamous household. The father was the head of the overall household which consisted of many women, however each woman was the head of her own household and all decisions pertaining to that household were made by her, albeit through consultation with the father. Eustina who has done some feminist research of her own, points out that African women are determined and are not subjugated by men, she remarks that men think they have the power but they actually do not, they just want to believe so because of their insecurities. She remarks,

..... in my culture the man decides things overall that involve the whole family. It's like how can my mother decide the things of another wife and how can the other wife decide the things of my mother? But it is my father who decides the things involving all of us, because he is the father, so when it comes to that, each one has the power limited to their own area and household. Each woman has the power over her children and no woman has any power over the other's children.

She gives the example of her mother as being a strong woman who was able to stand on her feet during difficult times without the help of her husband. She added,

...to be determined is extremely something that modern women of my age don't have. Her determination, to keep us alive and safe, we all know in many cultures that the man is the one to look for the security of the family, the power, whatever you can describe but look here she was, she was the one to be powerful, to feed us, to protect us, to do everything that my father should also provide, African women are strong.

However Eustina like most of the participants and also coming from a very indigenous traditional culture who are still holding on to the old customs and traditions acknowledges the gender role differentiation as being very pronounced in her culture. She reports,

.... boys are taught to be warriors to fight the lions and when you grow up the society will depend on you. The girls are taught to be strong mothers and we actually have separate responsibilities, like the house belongs to a woman in my culture. It means all the authority of the house inside belongs to her this entails her children, the homestead and everything. The father now with the culture of polygamy is having the authority over all, over this house, over this house like an umbrella. He does not very much interfere with house responsibilities, it is the mother who decides everything in the house and he decides the responsibility of the whole household.

Mono has had different experiences with regards to gender issues in her home; she describes her family as being modern. She comes from a home where both parents were working and everybody had to help to take care of the home. Her father was the one who was mostly at home and he would do some house chores in the absence of her mother. However Mono points out that she married a man who comes from a family where boys were not supposed to

do anything in the home, all the household duties are for the woman, so she was expected to do everything in the house. She mentions that when they were in their country they had someone who was helping in the house but when they moved to Norway things were difficult for her. Mono reflects,

....I think my parents were different, I don't know. We used to share duties equally; there was no boy or girl job. We used to share days in doing kitchen chores, or when I am cooking my brothers would be washing dishes and cleaning, so there were no boy or girl duties. My mother used to work and my father would be home most of the time. So when my mum came back she would find him already cooked super. We were raised like that, people around used to laugh at how my parents ran things at our home, they said my parents were crazy, how could they let boys do the kitchen chores, but my father used to just ignore them and say, "I know what I m doing" .....but my husband still wants his things done for him.

Asked to comment on how she has managed in a different culture which has different values on this issue she mentions that she likes the idea that there is equal distribution of home duties in the Norwegian culture, all does not fall on the shoulders of the woman like in Africa. Mono recalls,

.... here in Norway, men do most of the house work than women or maybe its half. You find there is no job dedicated to a woman or man, so if it is cooking they give each other turns. That's nice because they don't give the burden on one person.. : I like this because in Africa women are taken for granted, somehow I feel men abuse women. For instance you work the same job and same hours, but the man says he is the one who is tired when he gets home. The woman has to work again in the house to do everything. I like the way the Norwegians practice it, they share the duties. They treat each other equally; it's an eye opener for foreigners.

Eustina observes that the set up of the patriarchal society gives a lot of men comfort when they believe that it is them who have the power in the home, in reality according to Eustina men essentially do not and they hide their insecurities behind these patriarchal discourses.

Zinzi describes gender differences as being very much pronounced in her country as well. She reports that she has sometimes felt that men thought they owned their women. She comments that at her place of work she sometimes felt that her input was not considered as being very valuable and what she had to contribute was always disregarded.

When I asked Barbara her perspectives about gender equality as portrayed in the Norwegian culture she had this to contribute,

....I think they take it too far, it also differs from person to person however, but I feel that it's ok that people help each other in the house. It's nice for the man to help cook and take care of the children, but I feel that women are more care giving than men and I would rather be the

one to take care of the children and he can do other things, we complement each other. There are things I cannot do like taking care of the car for example, he can do that but it's ok to help each other with cooking when we both are tired and are coming from work that's ok I guess.

She felt however that there must be a boundary where there are defined gender roles as much as men and women are different. She felt that men are better in some things than women and vice-versa and so she preferred to do it like that in her house.

When I asked Frida about her opinion on the gender equality concept as portrayed in the Norwegian culture, she expressed that she felt that it was good that the division of gender roles was fair and equal. She however emphasized the importance of preserving her culture whilst at the same time appreciating that men and women should share duties in the house the way it is done in Norway. She reflects,

....It's okay the way they do it here, but we are not supposed to overdo it. We have to keep our culture. Sharing of duties is fine and should be practiced fairly because some women end up boasting. It's healthy for a relationship to give the man his position in the household. Every institution has a leader; this is how we are created.

Olana feels that the way gender equality is practiced in Norway is a welcome break for her. She believes sharing home duties is fair and it gives women an opportunity to pursue other interests in their lives not just taking care of the home. She adds,

.. I find it nice and quite interesting for a change. Back home it's like the general notion, the kitchen work and taking care of the children is all for women, but here there is equal opportunities. A woman can engage in all that she wants to do in life, that's nice.

Daisy feels comfortable with the gender differentiated roles in her country and tells that she misses that aspect of being made to feel like a woman and just take the role of a woman in the house without having to fight for being in the same position with a man. That is the way it is in her country. She comments,

...that thing of being a man and a woman at the same time is drastic and its traumatizing for me, even when I talk with my friends they all say that they miss being made to feel like a woman. Like the kind of relation that we have with the African men it is totally different from the kind of relationship we have with the Norwegian men. That is why the women here want equality, because they do everything the man is supposed to do. So they don't see why they should be placed in the position of a woman, because they can do whatever they are doing. In Africa it is different because usually as women we stay at home and take care of the home and kids. The man is out working and taking care of the bills and taking care of you and the kids and everything. When you come here you have to adjust and work hard to take care of the bills, you have to contribute and meet all the needs its difficult. The jobs are so difficult and frustrating back home I never thought I could work as a cleaner in a hotel but here I came and started working in a hotel as a cleaner. It brings you down, down rock bottom and you start to come up again and adjust and sometimes you are even embarrassed to tell the people at home what you are working with, because people think you are abroad and you have a good job.

Eustina expresses solidarity with the Norwegian women she mentioned that they work very hard especially at the universities. She feels that they have worked very hard to be where they are now and they deserve it. She feels however that even though it is said that Norwegian women are equal to men, in higher education she feels that there is still the glass ceiling to be broken. She has seen that the women are not reaching the level of men. With regards to the division of roles at home, she feels that it is a good thing that African men can also learn from this and she jokes that many men studying in Norway whose spouses remained in their home countries, just want to study and go back home and never bring their wives here. She asks,

...Why should a woman be a slave in the house, she works the same way and brings the same amount of money in the home and there are a lot of Norwegian women who are suffering actually at work and at home. Some are victimized by their bosses and some are suffering silently, these things are not said but there are many who have it just like us Africans.

Eustina maintains that women in Norway and elsewhere in the world deserve to be recognized for their efforts in all spheres of life whether be it in the work place or at home.

## **5.8 Learning to survive, coping through formal and informal education in the host country - Language learning and employment**

To find out what strategies they employed to be able to survive in a new culture the participants were asked to describe the formal and informal activities and experiences they embarked on when they came to Norway up to this day. Of all the participants that I interviewed, more than half speak the Norwegian language fluently and they went to school and took the exams. However two of them report that they attended language lessons for a very short while and had to go to work and thus they learnt most of their language out of school.

The rest are still studying Norwegian language and they are in their different levels. The participants report that when they came to Norway they faced difficulties first and foremost to communicate since they did not speak the language. However they mentioned that it was a relief for them that most Norwegians speak English, "although they do not seem to like to speak it!" remarked one of the participants. The participants were however aware that in order to get jobs they had to learn to speak Norwegian.

Eustina has been attending Norwegian Language for one year now; she is still taking level one because she just manages to go to Norwegian class once in a while for the reason that she has two small children who demand a lot of attention. She lives alone with the children in her student apartment. She is married to a man from her country that is also studying in another country. The children are going to school and she must pick them up every day when they finish school. She works as a cleaner at a hotel, so sometimes she is very tired and cannot find time to go to school. She now has a challenge however because her younger child speaks Norwegian and has limited command of her mother tongue. She must therefore communicate with the child in Norwegian. This makes her feel that she should have learnt the language when she first arrived in Norway.

She feels helpless because she cannot help her child with schoolwork as much as she would like. Eustina has not mastered the language and she sometimes needs somebody to translate to her in certain circumstances. She finds this very frustrating. When Eustina first came to Norway she lived in a student area where there were many people from her country and it was not difficult to adjust to coming to a new country.

Barbara reports that when she came to Norway, her cousin informed her that she had to begin the Norwegian class before she could begin to look for a job. So she went to classes immediately and learnt the basic Norwegian skills to go about her way in the city without having many problems. She mentions that it was easier for her to adjust because she had people she knew who helped her with some explanations if she happened to be in a situation she did not understand. She learnt Norwegian by practicing to speak at home, listening to the radio and watching the television so that she could remember the words, that way she could learn faster.

Barbara reports that she did not learn all her vocabulary in class, she mentions that as soon as she had mastered Norwegian, she got a job as a cleaner and there she was able to practice her Norwegian skills because she had no alternative but to speak. So she would learn new words at school and then practice them outside in an informal environment. This helped her very much to be able to learn quickly. At the place where she worked as a caregiver she felt respected by her workmates but she mentions that in the beginning the old people she was working with would not let her touch them because she was “utlending” which means foreigner and could not speak Norwegian. However when she later learned the language and put more effort to befriend them they became kind to her.

Barbara is working with the profession she is qualified for as a nurse, she mentions that the Norwegian labor office ( NAV) had a lot to do with her acquiring the professional language which she needed in order to begin working with what she had studied for. The class they offered taught the language that the immigrants working in the health sector needed in order to communicate effectively at work. Later Barbara met and married a Norwegian man. At home she speaks Norwegian, and this has contributed greatly to her Norwegian language acquisition.

When Olana came to Norway she knew it was to settle permanently, so she began to study Norwegian before she began to look for a job. She mentions that the first days were not so difficult because there were many people around her who came from her country who helped her to get around and explain things to her she could not understand. When she acquired some Norwegian skills she got a job as a cleaner in a hospital.

This is not what she had anticipated when she came to Norway she says. She reports that she felt she had no choice but to begin to work when she realized that the bills were piling up. She therefore stopped going to school after a few months and went to full time employment. She speaks Norwegian fluently. She mentions that she learnt how to speak outside class by speaking to her work mates. However she mentions that although her Norwegian language training was minimal it provided her with a foundation from which she was able to build upon in an informal setting outside school.

The desire to take further education is what motivated Emelda to take language class. The first time she came for family reunification with her husband, they were living up north in Norway. She reports that she had a difficult time to adjust to the Norwegian weather and culture. There were many people from her country in the town where she lived but people were very busy with their lives working and going to school and they had no time for her. She also felt that they were no longer behaving like people from her country although they actually were from her country. They had changed, they behaved more like Norwegians, she says. She became very lonely and she had her husband and her small son as the only close people around her.

She began Norwegian classes and took them for one and a half years, took the tests and after she got her education from her country authenticated in Norway she was able to qualify for a bachelor degree. However she mentions that although she passed the tests she was not very good in the language and therefore at the university she resorted to the use of a dictionary and used some English books when studying. She practiced the language she had acquired in the Norwegian class and she was able to master it eventually. Most of her vocabulary was acquired out of class. She reported,

...it was very difficult as an grown woman to sit in the class and learn new things, it was very difficult. I learnt spoken after I stayed here for 8 years. When I started working at the old people's home, I was mixing with Norwegian, so I learnt the spoken language very fast.

....I didn't have enough language or vocabulary in the beginning, to read the Norwegian books was very tough. I had to teach myself by listening to lectures of Norwegian language through a tape recorder. I had to sit at home listening to lectures, reading the books and referring to the dictionary.... the language problem was a barrier to look for any other or the job which I was trained. So the solution was to go for language courses. The experience I have in this country is that going to school alone does not give you more knowledge or more confidence in the Norwegian language and I have learnt a lot.

Emelda is fluent in the Norwegian language but she is not working with the profession she is trained for. She reports that she has gone for many interviews but has not found any jobs yet. She has been living in Norway for over 18 years. She works at the old people's home. She feels strongly about this subject and has this to say,

....no matter how you learn you cannot get a job which you were trained to do here. I am saying this from experience. I did my first and second degrees but it didn't prepare me for any job, I had a will and passion to work for what I was trained for. The language course does not prepare you for any work, but to mix and mingle with Norwegian speaking people. You can have an interview well prepared. Without any mistakes in one sentence but they don't employ you. I felt language alone is not enough to prepare you for jobs you are trained to do.

She reflects on how difficult it was for her to learn to put the Norwegian language to use, if one is not practicing out of the classroom environment,

....it was very difficult; I found Norwegian culture very cold. It was when I started to mingle with the Salvation Army Church members; that I found that they do it in a different way. So how can you learn, when somebody cannot greet another person? How can you learn? It was very difficult to learn in class, while you don't put into practice but when I started the 4<sup>th</sup> level of Language course, it helped me a lot because, what we learned in class, we put into practice and the teacher gives you the assignment. When you go home, he shows us what we are supposed to do. When we get back into class we discuss and practice the home work which he gave us. Our tutor puts emphasis not on just reading but also spoken it can improve the language skills.

Jill arrived in Norway and stayed for two years before she could begin with the Norwegian language. She is studying it now and is in her third level having taken exams and passed her second level. Jill migrated to Norway to take her PhD studies with the intention of going back to her country when she finished. She came to Norway as a student and therefore her permit to live in Norway did not qualify her to receive free Norwegian language tutoring. Thus she had to wait, she also mentioned that when she came to Norway she was expecting a baby and gave birth there after so she could not take Norwegian lessons, attend to her studies and do language courses at the same time.

Because Jill had no intention of settling in Norway permanently in the beginning she did not feel any pressure to learn the Norwegian language. She felt she did not need it. She and her husband spoke their language at home and then English with the other immigrants so she did not feel any pressure to learning Norwegian, however when her first child began at kindergarten and was speaking Norwegian she felt the need to take the language lessons in order to be able to communicate with her child.



Jill reports that when she first came to Norway she lived in an area where many immigrants lived. She had immigrant neighbors who helped her when she needed help, thereafter her husband arrived and she had company so she did not feel lonely or dejected. She points out that she was happy to get out of her country and therefore she had a positive outlook on everything. Thus her attitude enabled her to adjust to the Norwegian situation in a positive way. She however faced difficulties in the shops where everything was written in Norwegian,

.... it was very difficult; sometimes you tend to buy the wrong things. It was very difficult to just figure out simple things and some urgent letters were sent to us needing some urgent response but we didn't understand.

She did not look for a job as soon as she came since she was expecting a baby however she later on got a cleaning job. She has no negative feeling about not getting the job she is trained for as a scientist and she feels grateful for having been afforded a chance to move out of her country. She found the environment at her workplace positive and respectful. She comments that she likes the idea that people respect you because you have a job to go to. She likes that about Norway, it does not matter what you are working with, and people respect you because you are a human being. She finds this difference from her country where people do not respect you when you work as a cleaner quite refreshing.

Star came to Norway to study and she decided to settle in Norway permanently, since she had a study permit she had to pay for her own tuition at the Norwegian language class. Norwegian language tutoring was very expensive for her and she decided to wait until she could qualify for free tutoring. She later took the language lessons and studied up to level three. Star is a qualified teacher and has achieved two masters degrees, although she was not willing to disclose what she worked with at the moment, she expressed that she was not satisfied with her present employment. Star reports that when she came to Norway she met many people from her country therefore she did not have major problems to adjust, she also had the support of her family who were around her.

Frida had a difficult experience when she came to Norway. She did not know anyone in the neighborhood where she lived and her only contact was her Norwegian husband and his mother who could not speak English. She disliked her new environment; she had problems to adjust because she was the only black person living at that area where she and her husband lived. She felt depressed and she wanted to go back to her country,

...when I came to visit the first time I did not like the environment at all. Before I came here for the first visit. I had been thinking that I could have the life that I was used to in my country or more, but then when I came it was the opposite. That you are home the whole time without anyone to talk to except that person you live with, unless you go out for a walk. You are just stuck, or if you do get out you will walk alone until you come back. When you try to go to a coffee shop, you will be there alone until you live the place without anybody having looked at you or greeted you, that was unusual, strange and depressing like you are a nobody.

Frida reports that during the first days she spent most of her time with her mother in law as her husband was always travelling. This helped her to learn Norwegian. She also began her classes immediately because she intended to study for her bachelor degree. As Frida was in Norway on the grounds of family reunion with a Norwegian citizen, she qualified for state funding in her Norwegian course. She studied Norwegian for a period of 15 months before she began her studies in higher education,

...what contributed to me learning the language was my mother in law. She didn't understand English and I was staying with her most of the time. In three months I understood a little bit of Norwegian.

When she finished her Norwegian language course Frida got a job as a cleaner. She could not find a job she had trained for and had experience in from her country. She mentions that she was used to earning her own money such that she had no choice but to begin to work even though she did not like the job. She mentions that she felt embarrassed by her job that she did not tell people what she was working with back in her country.

Frida tells that she does not feel that the Norwegian language course she got was on its own was enough to provide her with the language skills she needed to be able to function in the work environment. The fact that she was also speaking Norwegian at home helped her to learn the language quickly. So she began to study for her bachelor degree and she is in her final stages now. She is looking forward to finishing so that she can look for a professional job. She is optimistic about finding the job of her dreams.

Mono found adjusting to the Norwegian weather, food and society very difficult. Because she was pregnant when she came to Norway she could not begin any Norwegian language course or to try and find a job. She did not like the apartment where they were to live because it was too small. She became home sick and depressed. However later on, when she could begin to work she went to look for a teaching position at a nearby school because she had been told that there was a need for teachers and was told that she did not qualify. She commented,

... I decided to look for a nearest school where I looked for a job. The school principal was surprised, they told me I was not qualified to teach there. So I was supposed to get training again in Norway. I was embarrassed that my education was not even recognized. I considered myself well trained and good at my job, so finally I got a job to clean houses and I would get Kr 500, - per month and we would use that for food. I was not used to a life like that and I did not like cleaning people's houses they were so dirty I was appalled but I had no choice, I felt so small and disrespected.

When Mono finally began with the lessons she continued to have breaks in between courses due to family issues. She also mentions that she did not put much importance in the beginning of the Norwegian course because she did not see the need to learn Norwegian after all. The job she would get was as a hotel cleaner. She also mentioned that she had seen people who had good Norwegian skills still doing the cleaning jobs. This was discouraging.

She reports that however she realized that she had no choice but to take the language course to move on with life in Norway. Mono is continuing with her language lessons and doing her bachelor degree at the same time. However she is not that optimistic about getting a job after finishing her education, she points out that she is just studying for self fulfillment rather than hoping for a good job.

The first days in Norway were very lonely for Daisy as well, but when she went to Norwegian classes, she met new friends and things became better for her she reports that she felt,

....very lonely, it does take a long time before you can meet nice people you can trust. So in the beginning it is just you and your husband and then later when I went to school I began making friends and we were visiting each other and it was getting better with time. But one thing I appreciate about it is that some Norwegians are very positive and they are always ready to give somebody a chance to try even if they don't believe in you. They just give you a chance to see if you will do what you are saying you will do.

Daisy did not stay that long in the Norwegian language course because she had to work in order to send money to support her family back home. She wanted to change their life by contributing financially so she got a job at a local hotel,

.....cleaning, you know these are the only jobs you would get here, so my boss asked if I was able to do the job even if I did not speak Norwegian,. I worked there, got some experience and positive things came up from that so I have also benefited, so I cannot say that everything is negative there are those who are willing to give us a chance to fit in and to try so I appreciate what my boss did.

Going to Norwegian classes and learning some basic language skills enabled Daisy to participate better in the society and not to feel isolated although she did not attend the whole course; it provided her with a good background to learn the language on her own later because before she had learnt Norwegian language things had been difficult for her,

...It was difficult because during that time my husband had to translate everything. You feel very handicapped because there was nothing you could understand when you were alone. It's different from an English country because everything is in Norwegian.

... Learning Norwegian helped me to mix and mingle with the people of the community, because they are not sociable when you don't speak Norwegian because nobody wants to translate. Some of them are not willing to speak in English. So it's very difficult to communicate, they don't want to speak with you because you don't speak Norwegian. The thing is I'm a quick learner in languages and I don't have any problems in learning languages and I was very determined, so I used to put a lot of effort on myself. I was learning through CD and a lot of books.

When Zinzi arrived in Norway things were not so difficult for her because she knew some Norwegians (one of them would later become her husband) who had prepared things prior to her arrival. She also had a close friend from her culture who helped her find her way around Oslo. However when the excitement of coming to a new country had worn off she had to begin to look for a job,

...that was another issue which was a bit irritating, to find a cleaning job and that you should speak Norwegian to get a cleaning job. I think this is the frustration everyone has gone through; because the first time you are coming and you got a scholarship you don't think that you will have to begin to need to work because you think that by getting a scholarship everything would be fine. But then when you realize that you actually need extra money to live that's when the idea of a job hits you. I started looking for it and one day I remember visiting 24 hotels in a day then I got a job in one hotel. It was very tiring and I think for me what was more frustrating was that we don't do that at home. Somehow you felt like they were not appreciating what you were doing and they also did not understand that you were not a cleaner but you were working there because you did not have any other options but they just thought that was the only thing you could do which was all the more insulting.

Zinzi attended her Norwegian lessons up to the second level but because she had to live the country to go and study for one-year degree in another country, she had to stop going to language school. However she continued learning her language lessons from the internet which she found helpful. When she came back she got another job where she felt better appreciated and thus enjoyed working there. Her Norwegian skills had improved and she found communication with fellow employees much better. She remarked,

... in summer I worked with *omsorg* (care giving) in Lørenskog and I was working in the home for the old in a hospital. Sometimes I would work in the laundry to fold clothes. But I think what was different there is that I felt I was appreciated there most probable because my mother in law was one of the nurses working there and was in the leadership in that section where I was. What was interesting were the discussions I had with the old people I kind of got used to them and they got used to me in a way I became the grandchild they did not have and so they went round calling me *jenta mi*.

A question was posed to find out how the women felt about speaking Norwegian with a foreign accent, the participants in my study were not that much affected by the way they pronounced the language and most of them were convinced that the ethnic Norwegians themselves understood that they are foreigners and are in the process of learning, therefore they cannot be expected to speak the language fluently. However a few expressed that there were times when they had been asked to repeat things that they had said because they had not said them clearly or correctly enough for ethnic Norwegians to understand. They said they felt like fools and did not want to repeat what they said. Daisy had this to say,

...Sometimes when you are speaking Norwegian, you say the whole sentence and when you are finished someone says “*Hva?*” (What?) And then you have to repeat the whole sentence again, I find it so irritating and annoying and then I switch to English because I feel very unsure and less confident.

Most of the participants felt that the Norwegians were very encouraging and supportive, when someone showed that they were making effort they were willing to help. Mono added,

.... I feel as if, people are judging me when I am speaking. Like some Norwegians will ask you what you have said. I end up switching to English, I feel humiliated with that but there are others who are helpful and are more than willing to help. All I want is that people understand that I am a foreigner and I need help to learn, we are not thriving for perfection.

The participants were also asked whether they felt that the Norwegian language has taken some of their identity. Most of the participants did not feel that their identity was threatened. They however did feel a sense of not belonging to the Norwegian culture. One participant said.

... my identity will never be taken away I am who I am and I will never be a Norwegian no matter what happens.

Emelda feels that she is caught up in two cultures after living in Norway for 18 years. She does not know how to handle things at times and she feels that she does not understand both cultures well. But living in the Norwegian culture or learning the Norwegian language has not taken her identity. She observes,

..... it didn't take any of my cultural values. It's just that personally I am a bit conservative; it's not easy when you are coming from a cultural background like mine. It has improved my vision the way I approach people. But it has transformed me in a positive way; the way I look at things is now different.

Frida feels that Norwegian is bringing confusion to her other language skills. She reported,

.... my English is now not perfect. I have stayed in Norway six years without reading English novels and talking English. So I m struggling to construct a good sentence, even my mother tongue is affected now, it's the same. I am now mixing languages, English, my mother tongue and Norwegian.

One of the participants felt a sense of disconnection and she mentions that she feels she has lost her soul sometimes, "but I try the best I can."

The language teachers that were interviewed reported that they are well qualified in the field of pedagogy. Both teachers had university education and they felt that they were comfortable teaching immigrants. Although the teachers that I talked to did not have special training in the field of teaching adults, they were competent in the methods of teaching language as a second language. One of the teachers had worked in the immigrations department and had therefore some experience in working with members of a different culture. The teachers mentioned that the content they taught covered all the skills that were necessary for the immigrants to participate in the larger society. Both teachers admit that the content found in the books was not enough and so they improvised by getting newspaper articles and other materials to improve the quality of the content.

The teachers shared with me that they had observed certain tendencies that indicated different styles of learning among immigrants. The immigrants mostly favored behavioral learning instead of constructivist learning since they were aware of this fact they always tried to challenge the students to engage in collaborative learning by encouraging discussions in class. This provided the students with the opportunity to speak even for those who do not want to participate. The teachers reported that they felt that the content and the methods of teaching they employed equipped the student with enough language skills to participate in the society, however they mentioned that it is up to the students themselves how motivated they were. The teachers mentioned some challenges like those mentioned by the participants which prevent the immigrants from finishing their Norwegian tutoring.

## **5.9 Experiences during self -development in Norway**

As discussed in the earlier chapters, all the participants in this study have embarked on further studies in Norway. Some of the participants in this study had to learn the Norwegian language first before they took their education and therefore they faced a double challenge of learning in a language that they had learnt as adults and were not proficient in. They were learning as adult women in an environment where most of the learners were just from high school and the fact that they were immigrants.

For those participants who took their education in Norwegian, all report that it was not difficult to come into higher education after they had taken the Norwegian language course at level four or the Bergenstest. Whereas the ones who needed to take a bachelor degree in English it was difficult as there was no such program offered before, so they had had to wait until some colleges offered this program in English and they were offered places after application. The other groups represented in this study are those who took their masters and doctorates which were taught in English. All of them have experienced some differences in how they learned back in their home countries and here in Norway.

The participants were able to compare their experiences since they attended college in their countries and continued with higher education here in Norway. Major differences were experienced by the participants in the methods of teaching used by the teachers, the classroom environment in relation to other students and the interaction with other students during lessons.

Frida experienced her school environment as being relaxed as compared to her experiences in her home country. She reports that she felt that the other students did not take school seriously. Some would go to work and not come to school at all and nobody would bother to ask them. In her country that would never happen, everybody is expected to come to school on a daily basis otherwise one is asked to explain, and then this would reflect negatively on someone. She reflected,

.....I experienced that Norwegians don't want to come to school. They don't come every day, they don't want to work in groups, so it's impossible to be grouped with Norwegians because they come only for exams, so it was impossible to work with them. So we moved a motion to be put in groups of foreigners alone and we were working properly and we were going to make it and pass our exams with better grades.

Daisy also experienced some differences in the way the classroom environment is in the Norwegian classroom as compared to her experiences in her country. She comments,

....it's very difficult with these Norwegians, especially the young ones. The way they behave in class is totally different from the way we do in African culture. They are very disrespectful; they don't listen to the teacher. They will be busy doing their own things in class. They don't concentrate and are totally different from the British type of learning, sit still and concentrate and participate in the class. It's totally different, their behavior demoralizes you when you want to concentrate and understand... you feel that you must ask a question what am I doing here, but the only solution is to motivate yourself and concentrate and commit to your work...but you can't help but feel invisible, it's discouraging if you are not strong you can give up.

Emelda reports that when she went for her lessons in the first days she was shocked at how the students in her class related to the teachers. She was not used to the idea that students addressed the teacher by their first name and that they could do anything in class such as eating when the teacher is busy teaching,

...it was completely different, in my first lecture, I got a shock because of the way the students were relaxed. In my country you have to concentrate and give the lecturer the respect he needs, but here they don't respect their lecturers.

However when Emelda got used to the Norwegian way of doing things she reports that the way of learning in Norway,



.... helped me to open up and be active in all my learning process than I was before. In my country, as a student you were supposed to sit down and listen whilst the teacher is lecturing and writing notes down but here you discuss and get involved in the lesson.

With regards to the relationship between the teachers and the students, Olana reports that she found the relaxed atmosphere here in Norway liberating for her. As an adult one does not need to be pushed to do their work everyone is at school because they wish to have an education. However Olana experienced episodes of isolation and not belonging during interaction between herself and the Norwegian students. She comments,

...here we were more relaxed; we could talk to the teacher and actually discuss what we did not understand. Back home it's more like a gap between the teachers and students. The way we have too much respect for our teacher back home, but here its more relaxed I think it's nice.... but still you could see the difference between you being a foreigner and the proper Norwegians at school. There is always that feeling of isolation from the group. I feel so because in a situation when you are supposed to do group work. You are not fully accepted in their groups. They have their own way of doing things, so you don't blend in their group. And you are seen as inferior, you don't have enough ideas, but when you hand in your work you get better grades sometimes.

With regards to interaction with other students, Mono also expressed that she faced challenges in group work and feels that she even found it better to work alone. She remarks,

....when it comes to working in groups they don't work well. We find students from different departments and you can't agree on one thing. Even if you participate they don't recognize your answer, even if it's correct. Group activity is stressful and I find it better to work alone than in groups.

The same sentiments were also expressed by Olana who reports that she felt invisible in many instances because she was not used to talking easily in class without lifting up her hand. Even though she had an answer in the tip of her tongue because of the way she was socialized at school in her country she found it difficult just to shout out answers and begin to talk. It was different in Norway, sometimes she knew the answer to a question the teacher had posed but she could not gather the courage to speak until someone comes up with what she knew and this was very frustrating for her. She too found working in groups very challenging. She adds,

....here you could see that they can speak out more easily than us. So sometimes you don't speak out, they mistake that for the lack of knowledge. And yet in this case it's just the matter of cultural differences... I felt frustrated in group activities as well because, sometimes you get people who might accept what you contributed and sometimes they don't even recognize you and your participation. You can contribute something which is correct but they don't accept it as a correct answer, so it's really frustrating.

With regards to the differences in the classroom environment Eustina did not find that it was that different. She feels that the experiences in her country and her experiences here were quite similar. She took two masters degrees at the same university. However she found that it was a challenge to work together in groups, she expresses that the Norwegian students have their own way of doing things and it is a challenge to do group activity with them.

Barbara took her education in another town out of Oslo and she felt that her fellow students were very helpful as she had challenges to follow because the teaching was done in Norwegian and her mastery of academic language was limited. She points out however that her class mates were all adult nurses who were on a self development degree program from their job, being adults they were more accommodative. She reports that she often fell back on the strategies which she learnt back home which made her pass like memorizing and studying very hard, she feels that this had made her succeed in her learning of the Norwegian language. Barbara reports that she enjoyed the styles of teaching here in Norway and how the teachers can have personal interaction with the students as compared to her country where teachers did not mix with students. She reported,

.....it was important for me to do well in class, so yes the same way I memorized things to pass back home it's the same way I did with the Norwegian language and myself development here as well. I wrote words on paper and I memorized them so as to remember them later, I also tried to talk with people. I found out that here you are free to say what you think in the classroom without being judged or labeled as being disrespectful. In my country you could not challenge a teacher or just speak up without being asked to speak then you would be disrespectful. There was also a lot of punishment it appeared as if you are not actually learning for your own good, it was as if you are being forced to learn so it was not a nice experience. Here it is different, they make you understand that you are learning for your own good, you can be friends with the teacher; you don't need to be afraid of the teacher. It was strange to me at first but I felt it was a nice thing and I liked it the relaxed interactions. You can discuss with the teacher about other things not just school things.

### **5.10 Experiencing Different Roles as students, mothers, wives and workers**

90% of the participants in this study have children and all of them are married. The women had to cope with the demands of being in education, attending to the family and being in employment. This presented challenges for the women and they expressed that the conflicting roles were difficult to deal with. The participants reported that they had difficulties in finding time to study but they were still determined to continue with their studies. Emelda reports,

....being a mother, a wife and a student at the same time is not easy. I had to find a way to juggle these roles. I almost gave up. I had to go to school, come home and cook and my son was very young at that time. Sometimes I felt guilty that I did not spend much time with him, because during my spare time I had to study it was not easy.

The same sentiments were expressed by Mono and Eustina. Mono has three children and she felt that the burden of taking care of the children fell mostly on her shoulders than on her husband. She had to punctuate the pursuit of her studies with staying at home to take care of the children. Eustina had difficulties to keep up with her Norwegian classes because she had to take care of the children. Her husband does not live in Norway thus she had nobody to help her with the children, so her schoolwork suffered as result. Mono expressed,

....It was easier when we were back home, there was always someone who could take care of our child and I could concentrated on my studies as well. Here it is just us and my husband was socialized to get things done for him by the women .It really stressed me a lot. I am still struggling with it.

### **5.11 Successes and Challenges Faced in the process of adaptation**

The participants in this study have each had different successes and challenges in their adaptation processes. Most of them report that they are doing well in Norway and feel that they are active in the society and they do not feel isolated and left out because they have learnt some strategies on how to keep going. Of all the participants interviewed only three are not in employment. From these three two are not in employment because they chose not to for personal private reasons. However one of them is out of employment because she cannot find employment which will best suit her medical condition as she has problems to do heavy manual work which she says it is the only employment she has been able to find so far. For most of the participants the biggest challenge has been to learn a new language when one has become an adult.

Most report that it was a challenge and stressful to learn that before one could get employment, one had to understand some Norwegian. They however saw this as a motivating factor to learn the language fast enough rather than seeing it as being negative. Eustina comments “If you negate everything here, you will be a very unhappy woman.” Mono who is still attending Norwegian lessons expresses that she is frustrated because she does not see that she is making any progress in learning it. She feels that in her mastery of the language some days are better than others and some days are worse. She mentions that when

she lives school she has nobody to practice Norwegian with and has to wait until she goes back to school the following morning to be able to practice speaking the language and she feels this is slowing down her progress. She is not working and she is married to a man from her country therefore the language spoken at home is not Norwegian, although she sometimes tries to speak the language with her youngest child who does not speak the home language that well.

Eustina expresses the same sentiments, as she is still in her first level. She has not mastered enough language to be able to converse. She thus has a challenge at home when she has to speak with her son who speaks to her in Norwegian. She also finds it challenging that she must work very hard to support herself and her children since her husband is back in Africa so she must be the breadwinner. She supports her children here and also sends money to her family back home. She therefore does not get enough time to attend every lesson. She finds herself having to fulfill multiple roles without any help. She is in difficult and demanding employment that leaves her very tired every evening when she finishes work. This interferes with her going to Norwegian language school and she finds it very frustrating.

Emelda found language learning very challenging for her as well; she had problems with the pronunciation of words. At the same time as she was studying she had a young child whom she had to take care of. She therefore found it very difficult and challenging combining the role of mother and student at the same time.

Emelda who has been in Norway for 18 years is frustrated about the fact that she has obtained her bachelor degree and her master's degree in Norway and is fluent in speaking Norwegian but she still cannot get a job that she feels is suitable to her academic qualifications. In this way she feels that she is unjustifiably left out of the society she feels that the purpose of going to Norwegian language class is to prepare someone to be able to be included in the society but not to work with what one is trained for. She observes,

.... there are frustrations when it comes to the job market, I have been here for almost 18 years, I feel that I m not part of the society. It could be difficult to get a job here but you could do a lot to prove to people that I can do it. That is the way which we have been raised.

This line of thought was repeated by Mono who expresses that she does not feel very optimistic about the prospect of getting a job after she finishes her bachelor degree and her language education because she knows some people who are highly educated and can speak

good Norwegian but still work in very low profile jobs. She finds this belittling and very discouraging “as if you are not worthy, you know nothing, even after getting education here.” The participants point out that through all these experiences they have learnt not to give up but continue to fight, this is the positive thing they say. Olana feels that she has been successful in her adaptation. She accepts her position, as a foreigner here and therefore does not expect much. She must accept that the Norwegians will always come first before her in any situation and she just has to accept it and move on with her life. She reports that she accepts it as a fact that, if she were to go to a job interview with a Norwegian, according to her the employer will obviously choose a Norwegian before her, because she is a foreigner. This helps her to forget the whole issue and try again another time. She reports,

....I find the system such that if you go to an office for a service being positive, its transparent, and more organized you are respected that you were there before the other person and you are served first, unlike back home where somebody who is known very much when he/she comes after me, then he is going to be served first before me. However what I find frustrating is that there are some jobs that I felt that I was qualified to do but I didn't have the chance to go for interview. But with time you start to adjust and move on with your life,. For me I appreciate what I have done and I am satisfied by only accepting what I have got, you cannot expect to be chosen above a Norwegian person in an interview even though you both have the same qualification, we have to be realistic, that does not mean other options are closed.

Olana finds it challenging that the Norwegian society is not as open as in her country, she feels that this is a part that she misses, that people are friendlier. She comments,

....well I think the biggest challenge for me has been socializing because we are open people, more free and spend time with other people. But here its kind like reserved you have to watch what you say and to whom you say it to. You can't just joke around and greeting everybody as you do back home. I think those are some kind of habits and values that run deep in us. So for me it was the most challenging situation.

Apart from the frustration of not finding a job Mono likes how the Norwegian society influences her children. She likes that the children are safe and protected in this country. She remarked,

....I like that my children act and behave like Norwegians. And I don't have any problems with that. I have adapted to this lifestyle and I think it is right.

Emelda reports that she has faced some challenges in the way the Norwegian society brings up the children. She feels that her children have adopted Norwegian values, which are very different from the values from her country and she finds it difficult how to raise her children. She sometimes does not know how to deal with certain situations that arise between her and

her children. Whether to deal with them the Norwegian way or the way she would have dealt with the situation in her country of origin. She reports,

....another thing is the family structure, I think the society has taken more of the responsibility that we who are here with children I find it difficult to be a parent to your own children without outside forces intervening. I want to raise my children in an African way to be an African child, he/she can be able to adapt to any society. If you became strict to your children you are called in to an office for a meeting, for me it's really frustrating. It's really frustrating.

All in all Emelda feels that she has successfully adapted to the Norwegian society as she can mix with Norwegians even though she does not have a job now. She is optimistic and is trying not to give up. However like she reports that she finds the society not open and it is difficult for her to get in contact with people. She adds,

....I m still trying to adapt and yes I am feeling comfortable here at the same time I have to think of where I came from. So that when I go back, I m not going to be a foreigner in my home country, but I feel I have adapted and I can speak the language. The society here it's not very open. It's very difficult to get in contact with people, even our neighbor that's a challenge. So it's more difficult because the language is very difficult and I have been pressed between two cultures, if I have been here for sometime so I can handle it so it's ok.

Barbara is happy with the way she has adapted to the Norwegian society she feels that living in Norway has opened many doors for her and also enlightened her in many different ways. She reports that she has changed her perspectives of looking at things that she otherwise would not have done had she not migrated to Norway. She remarked,

.... since I have been living here I feel that I have changed a lot in the way I view things, I know that I was not open and I was very reserved. I did not talk much I was very quiet before I came to Norway. In my culture you have no freedom just to express yourself like that. You are just silent most of the time, even if you want to say something, you are limited. This is how we were raised. That is the African culture, as a woman you cannot just say what you think if it is negative. I have begun to express how I feel, even at work when I am not happy about something I speak out.

However Barbara also adds that she faces challenges at work because of the silence discourse, which is a result of her socialization. She cannot speak out at work as much as her workmates do. She must first watch what the others will do first before she can express an opinion.

Daisy feels that she has adapted well in the Norwegian society and she can speak the language well. She works in a profession, which she is educated in and is happy with how things have turned out for her. She reports that it is difficult to make all decisions in the house as if she was a man. She is married to a foreigner who is also an immigrant to Norway. She comments,

.... the challenges for me are when I have to do all these men jobs which you never did in Africa. Literally trying to fix everything yourself, that has been a challenge; it's not easy because all my life I have been living in a culture which is different from this one. It's not easy to get over it. The mentality that we had from home is so different from here. It is totally frustrating, people here think differently and also do things different and you feel caught between the two cultures.

Jill reports that she has accepted the fact that she is in a different culture from her own and does not want to force issues and expect too much. She reported,

.....maybe I told myself I would never 100% neither would I, 50% adapt to the Norwegian culture. We have just learnt to be content in some situations, we realize that we will never penetrate, but we find our own way coping in the environment without trying to force in the culture that is not open. So that is my coping mechanism. Be it in the office environment or wherever, I don't try to force my opinion when I realize it is not well accepted. We are learning to cope with what we find here in this environment and the culture.

With regards to language Jill feels that it has been a difficult process for her to learn the language. She has a young son who speaks just Norwegian to her and her husband. She feels that the Norwegian language has taken away the possibility for their son to learn his mother tongue. She commented,

.... the language has challenged me so much, especially with regards to my son. I feel that he has been robbed of his mother tongue and culture: Right now he knows that mum understands a little bit of Norwegian. In the past he used to mix both Norwegian and my language to help me to understand. As he becomes older he is losing the little first language that he learnt from us. This Norwegian culture really clashes with my cultural values. When I came here you know I had other cultural values, that is, we used to share problems, mingling with friends but here you have to mind your own business, breaking through to this host culture is very hard. What you may do or say is not culturally accepted in other cultures.

Zinzi also feels that she has adapted well in the host society. Although she is not yet fluent in Norwegian language, she can understand it and she sometimes speaks it at home with her husband who is supportive and helps her out with things. However she feels that the Norwegian language is used to exclude people from certain activities in the society .She does not understand why it is so important that one should speak Norwegian fluently before one can be employed. She poses the question,

...why do I need to speak Norwegian when I am going to be cleaning a hotel room or an office in the evening when everyone else is gone and I have nobody who talks with me at that point. How can I be expected to learn Norwegian and speak it fluently if I cannot get a job and mix with other people who are not just my family? How many years can it take me as an adult to speak fluent Norwegian, does that therefore mean I will be without a job for many years then whilst I try to polish my Norwegian?

Zinzi who is not working at the moment but doing some projects to generate income expresses her frustration in that she felt that she was brought to nothing when she was cleaning at the hotel where she felt not appreciated. This she found to be a big challenge. She feels that if she could have a way of learning more about the culture, it would enable her to integrate better. She comments,

....I think I would like to understand the Norwegian culture more. It is different, like when one cracks a joke in Norwegian and being able to understand it. If somebody says a joke in Norwegian that is totally deep rooted in the Norwegian culture, when I will be capable of laughing at the same jokes as the Norwegians then I think I at that time I would be integrated. For now I have not reached that level I would say.

Asked whether Zinzi felt she had adapted well, she replied,

....I have to a certain extent because I can still live my life without feeling like I need to go out and make friends with Norwegians. But is that a good thing? Probably not because I do not think that foreigners should make their own ghetto or become isolated as it is happening in other parts Europe, that will happen in Norway with time.

## **5.12 Conclusion**

This chapter has revealed the different ways in which the participants in this study have experienced the adaptation processes into the Norwegian culture, and how their former experiences have influenced the way the participants have adapted, learnt the language and embarked on self development in Norway. The participants' contributions show that there are many different factors that contribute to individuals' different ways of learning and adapting in a different culture. The following chapter will look into these different factors and link them to different theories and the literature that guide this study.



## **Chapter Six**

### **6.0 Data Analysis and Discussion**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

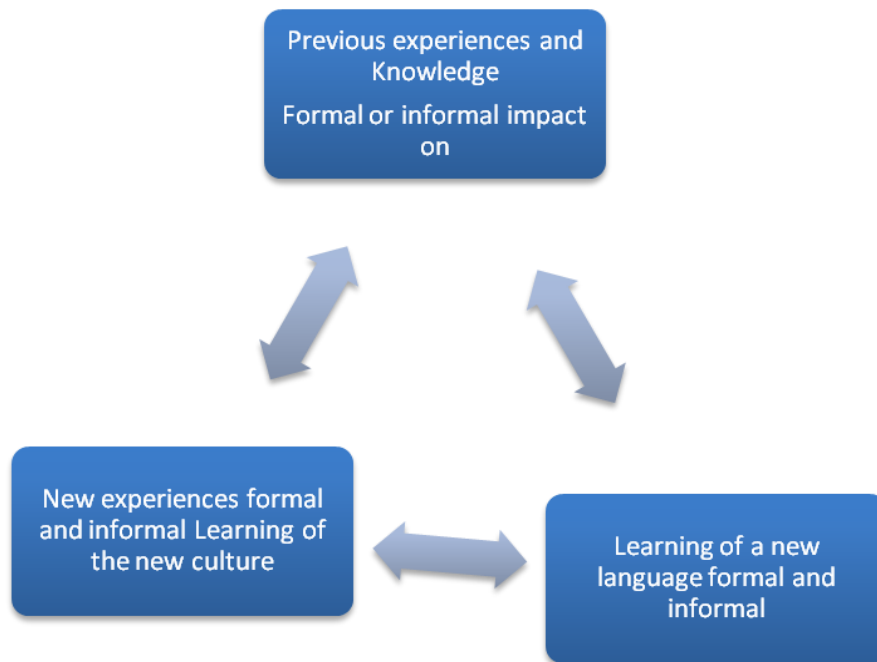
A critical analysis of the data presented in the previous chapter following the literature review, theoretical framework and research methodology show that there are deep-seated dynamics that are at play in the adaptation and self-development of women in this study. The departure point for this thesis was that African women, who have migrated from their country for various reasons and have settled in Norway, all have a story to tell. They have former experiences and former knowledge that have a major impact and contribute to how they conform to new knowledge and how it impacts the way they tackle things in the present and in the future self-development.

Therefore I set out to examine how they learn the language, adapt to the Norwegian culture and embark in self-development as they draw from the former experiences in their country of origin and the new experiences in the new country, since the past, the present and the future are all linked. Oakley rightly observes,

....the act of knowing is an extremely complex Endeavour, not only do different human beings know different things, bringing different values, beliefs and perceptions to what they know and how they know it, but the act of knowing and what is known are often irredeemably fused. (Oakely, 2000:291)

This study has been informed by the following model

**Figure 3 : The conceptual model of my study**



## **6.2 Early experiences through Informal and Formal learning:**

In this section I discuss the socialization processes in the country of origin, in the formal and informal settings and how these have influenced the way women have acquired knowledge in the new host country. The processes of re-socialization in the new culture as well as the gender and silence discourses are also discussed in this section.

### **6.2.1 The process of enculturation in the home and the community**

The findings from the previous chapter reveal that the participants in this study have different ways of constructing their reality. All of them expressed different ways of dealing with the situation of moving to a new culture and as mentioned earlier this can be viewed from the constructivist epistemology which focuses on knowledge acquisition, as being interpretive and that individuals are capable of constructing knowledge for themselves and the way people understand this knowledge guides how they act.

All the participants in this study expressed that they were socialized to the hard work ethic, which was instilled in them at a very early stage of their lives. Working hard was an integral part of their upbringing when they were growing up and this provided a solid foundation for them when they came to a new culture where their educational background was regarded as lacking correspondence in the Norwegian system of education and therefore not fitting for the Norwegian labor market, and thus the only employment they could obtain was labor intensive.

All the participants were involved in the cooperation among family members to work together to improve the difficult living conditions that they grew up under in the original country. This phenomenon can be explained by the cultural practices that emphasize the importance of teaching children hard work as proposed by Inglehart and Norris (2003) who suggest that traditional communities like those found in Africa emphasize survival values as well as obedience and submissiveness vis-à-vis tolerance and imagination. The findings revealed that the values that the participants learnt were mostly transmitted to them through family and the community structures.

The findings of this study suggest that through the process of enculturation all the participants learnt the values of self-reliance, being collaborative, working with other members of the family and the community for the betterment of their livelihoods and being innovative would later on provide a foundation to draw from in the new country. These constructivist learning experiences prepared the women to be able to handle the challenges that they would later face in the new host country and would influence how they interact with the members of the new culture. As this quote from Jill suggests,

....We used to live with a lot of extended family and we were all given the same amount of work, we learnt about the community spirit a lot. I remember we used to help each other as a community to work collectively for a particular family and they would also come to work at our home when invited. We made sure that when such an occasion arose our family would be represented, to contribute that way. So we got the exposure to that kind of life. We learnt that community spirit was important when there is a member of a community who has passed away we used to go, we learnt very early to be supportive of our community members, during the time of grief. We would go carrying some food and some contributions and also go and help to prepare food for the mourners there.

Informal learning within the home and the community provided the basic and initial learning activities for the participant where they learnt how to live with the extended family. Through enculturation the women learnt responsibility and that loyalty to the family was of utmost importance. This explains the situation why the participants continue to send money to their countries to the members of the extended family, family loyalty is deep seated and members of a family are dependent on each other. Collaborative learning was thus encouraged in the home and the community through doing things together and participating in their everyday lives. This study supports the evidence from the study by Alfred (2002), on the socio-cultural contexts of knowing conducted among British Caribbean women who migrated to America. The findings of Alfred 's study also revealed that the women drew from the early socialization experiences from their country of origin into finding a new identity in America.

### **6.2.2 The process of enculturation through formal learning in the school**

Coleman (1990), posits that formal education in the school is a secondary agent of socialization, which Berry (1992), terms horizontal enculturation. Furthermore Giddens (2006), contends that the family is the main agent of socialization and the school is the secondary one. Thus the school plays a significant role in the socialization of individuals. Hence the early formal learning experiences in the school have contributed a great deal into the women's constructions of knowledge in their host country.

The women in this study come from countries that were former colonies of Britain and thus the education they obtained was based on the British model. During and after the colonial period education was highly competitive as well as selective in most African countries. It therefore was only attainable for those students who were high academic achievers. Such students were the ones who had a chance of going into secondary schools or universities. Therefore studying opportunities were limited for most students. Although all of the women in this study had completed their secondary education in their country, some of them had been hindered to obtain university education by this barrier. Migrating to Norway provided that opportunity to embark on further education.

The discussion in the previous chapters showed that one of the reasons why the women migrated to Norway was for study purposes. Research from other countries also suggests that the aspiration to improve their academic achievements is one of the reasons why individuals move to other countries. One example is the study by Kemuma (2000), conducted on how Kenyan immigrants oriented themselves in the Swedish society revealed that the immigrants viewed Sweden as a country full of opportunities where they could develop themselves academically and hence improve their quality of life.

The findings revealed that the method of learning for all the women in their home countries was behaviorist. Emphasis was put on the respect for the teacher as all of them reported. The teaching was mainly by rote method and the women learnt by memorization, this helped them to study for their exams and pass. The women reported that they still drew back on this method during their studies in Norway and this was confirmed by the teacher I interviewed who reported to have seen this tendency among African women in the language classes she taught.

The type of education which the women obtained equipped them with the skills and the discipline about how to approach the education they would later embark on in their host country. At school the women were socialized to study hard and not give up and passing was emphasized above understanding. According to some of the participants moving to a new culture enabled them to change their perspectives and criticize this type of education when they compared it to the new country's type of education.

The participants acknowledge that in their cultures social status was defined by academic excellence and the method of evaluating this academic excellence was in turn defined by western standards, in particular the British model which they followed. Families viewed education as a means of improving their social status, by educating their children they would equip them with skills that would eventually lead them out of poverty. Jill's comment shows this,

....for me as a person it was very important (to get an education) and that is what my father wanted. My father always wanted us to pass and to go to university. He told us that he was not able to go there himself but we were to do it. He wanted to make a difference for his children and wanted us to pass. He did not want us to be poor in life, which is a value that he always emphasized on so my motivation for further studies came from home.

However this behaviorist education attained by the women in this study cannot be totally disregarded as the women report that it gave them a solid foundation which they draw back on as they self develop to the present moment. One of the participants reported that when she was learning the Norwegian language, she used to memorize the words and this way she was quick to learn it. Frida for example told that she used to compete with one of her classmates when they were given homework and by using this method she was able to learn Norwegian in a very short period of time. Through this process of early school socialization the women learnt the value of studying hard and that need to pass the exams, which drove the women still exists and continues to drive these women.

The emphasis of the education where the participants attended school was on behavioral learning, emphasis was placed on mastering what the teacher said and then reproduce it in the exam and thus interaction and collaborative learning in the class as well as critical learning was not very much encouraged. It was therefore a challenge for the participants in this study to participate in their school activities when they began school in Norway. Whilst collaborative learning had been present in informal settings, at the formal school it was lacking.

Most of the participants reported that because they had been socialized to sit in the classroom and listen to the teacher, they had not been trained to speak out and express what they thought and felt, it was difficult for them to begin to do it in Norway. While it is clear that the participants constructed their own knowledge when they were being socialized in the home and community, they also acquired behavioral knowledge at school. This therefore became a hindrance in the acquisition of constructed knowledge in the new culture where it is valued. They therefore had to learn this in order to meet the expectations of the new culture.

### **6.2.3 New experiences in the new culture and the acculturation process**

On arrival to a new country the participants had to learn a new culture as adult women. The study reveals that the process of moving to a new culture was very challenging for the participants. While in their home countries the women had been socialized according to the norms, values and beliefs of their country.

In migrating to a new culture the participants had to go over the process again as adults, Berry (1997), terms this process re-socialization which by definition is the learning of a new culture, a new language and finding a new self by going through societal and cultural changes through the process of acculturation.

Berry (1997), suggests that the experience of acculturation varies with each individual. The findings in this study revealed that the degree to which the participants were positive to adapting to their host culture and society depended on the variables of, voluntariness, mobility and permanence. As discussed in the findings chapter, the participants in this study fell into three groups. Those who had migrated to Norway through familial considerations, those who had migrated for human capital investments such as studying and the other group being the ones who refused to disclose the reason for coming to Norway.

The four participants who came to Norway for family reunion report that they found adapting to the Norwegian culture and society difficult. They report that in the beginning they felt a sense of disconnectedness and a loss of self. They mention that they felt uprooted from their orderly lives where they had established careers and were respected upcoming leaders and contributing members of the society and then to come to nothingness, invisibility and being voiceless was a devastating experience for them. Frida reports that she had to travel back to her country to rethink and make a final decision before she came back for good. Mono also disclosed that for a while she felt resentment to her husband for making her come to a country where she felt like she was nothing.

Those participants who refused to disclose the reason for coming to Norway revealed however that when they came to Norway they knew that it was to settle permanently, so for them it was a question of survival to adapt into the society at once. They felt the need to embark on language learning, get a job and move on with their lives because they knew that they would not go back to live in their of origin countries. This phenomenon goes in line with Berry's (ibid), suggestion about the variables mentioned earlier.

Those participants who came to Norway for study reasons and had no intention of settling permanently but later decided to do so are the ones who are still studying Norwegian. Settling to Norway had not been seen as a permanent venture but rather as being temporary initially, hence there had not been an urgent need to learn the language or adapt to the culture and society. The participants had not seen the need to learn the language when they would eventually move back to their home countries, so they did not bother to learn.

The study also revealed however that the participants who migrated to Norway because they chose to have a positive attitude towards their new host country, they did not mind the cleaning jobs initially because this was going to be temporary venture. Most of them mentioned that they had felt trapped in their own countries and they had welcomed the opportunity to get out and expand their academic potentials.

For all the women in this study, the transition to a new culture was less challenging for those who got in contact with members of their community or those who had a cultural mediator during the initial phase of their contact with the new culture. According to (Taft, 1987), a cultural mediator is one who assists in the adaptation process by being a model and provides guidance when it is needed. Members of one's community or a husband can fulfill that role.

The findings from the research on British Caribbean women (Alfred, 2002), in America discussed earlier in this chapter also revealed that those women who moved to a community which had a high concentration of people from their home country had a better time adapting to the American society than those who moved to an area which had few people from their country or none at all. Moreover research on Hispanic immigrants in America by Ashcraft (2005) on their language learning showed that those who had a network providing support fared better during the process of learning the English language. These findings were also consistent with the evidence found by Alpass et. Al. (2007), among the Chinese, Indians and South African immigrants in New Zealand and their mental well being. The evidence revealed that the participants who had contact with friends and family from their home country had good mental health.



In this study the participants who are married to Norwegian men reported that their husbands were supportive and nurturing, this helped in the transition to the new culture. One participant reported that when she came to Norway as a student she lived in a student town where there were many immigrants from different African countries and also people from her country, so this was helpful in making the transition less stressful for her. However for Frida who had no contact with people from her country the transition was a challenge since her only contact was her husband who was always travelling, she remarks,

.....that you are home the whole time without anyone to talk to except that person you live with, unless you go out for a walk, you are just stuck, or if you do you will walk alone until you come back, when you try to go to a coffee shop, you will be there alone until you leave the place without anybody having looked at you or greeted you, that was unusual, strange and depressing like you are.. a nobody you do not exist!

The women in this study however reported that their husbands were very supportive in the process of learning the new culture. Those women who are married to Norwegian men reported that it was much easier for them as they had someone around them who knew the system and this way they had the advantage of being more exposed to Norwegian speaking people than those who were married to men from their countries of origin.

### **6.3 Gender discourse, Silence discourse and finding the balance**

The participants in this study were raised in cultures where gender discrimination is pronounced. As shown by Hofstede's (2005) and Inglehard and Norris' (2003), dimensions of culture in the theory chapter, Africa ranks highly on the scores that represent the attitude to gender equality, the higher the score the less positive a country is to gender equality. All the participants in the study reported that they had been socialized to believing that the woman fulfilled a role different from that of the man at home.

One of the participants reported that there had to be a discussion between her parents before she could begin her education; this led her to beginning school later than usual. The argument was that since she was a girl she had to stay at home and help her mother to take care of the other children in the family. All the participants reported that the gender roles were clearly defined both at home and at school when they were growing up. At home girls were expected to clean the house, prepare meals and fetch water whilst the boys did things that were meant for boys like herding cattle or chopping wood. This is also confirmed in the study among Kenyan immigrants in Sweden by Kemuma (2000), who also pointed out that the gender roles were clearly differentiated in their country. In her research she writes that some of her participants reported that their male siblings' education was prioritized over theirs.

Emelda expressed that she found this gender discourse very frustrating but she could not question it as this was how it should be. The parents and the teachers' voice was final, she had to be obedient and not question anything as a child. She reports that she did not understand why they were the ones who had to fetch water for the teachers and not the boys. This discourse of silence is reproduced through the generations by way of the gender discourse that is translated as culture to keep women subordinate. As Giddens (1982), puts it, Discourse plays a major role in shaping how ideas are put forward and used to regulate how others act.

In moving to a new culture the participants had to be re-socialized into a new discourse on gender. Women and men are equal and the roles are not differentiated. The women had to re-negotiate their constructed knowledge on gender roles. Although most of them expressed that they liked the gender roles as portrayed in the Norwegian system most of them still did most of the work in the home because they felt that it was their duty to do the house work. One of the participants remarked that she felt guilty when she saw her husband preparing food while she was doing nothing, she felt that she did it better than him. It can be argued that we are what we are as a result of how we were socialized.

The discourse on gender has shaped the women to believe that they are the ones who are supposed to do the housework and even when they come to a culture that says house duties must be shared equally between both women and men. The discourse on gender which came about as a result of colonialist and patriarchal distortions of African culture (Mikell, 1997), and is still prevalent within the African context remains with the women; it is difficult to change our beliefs.

The discourse on silence has prevented African women questioning the justification of the discourse on gender in the African context. Despite the fact that in the Norwegian language teaching class the discourse on gender within the Norwegian context is translated to the women, they still face the challenge of finding the balance, as they remain loyal to their culture. According to Locke (2004), meanings are socially constructed through language and text and they are interlocked in the cultural context thus making the transition to the new culture challenging for the African woman.

Two of the participants reported that the discourse on gender was not so pronounced in their families when they were growing up. In Mono's family there were no duties that were carried out by boys or girls boys. There was no gender stereotyping, both the boys and the girls had to clean and prepare meals in the house. Since her father was mostly at home whilst her mother was at work, he would prepare food for the family. Mono remarks that their neighbors found this strange and could not understand how he behaved like that. Zinzi's father used to bake cakes for the family and on weekends he used to prepare food for the whole family. This shows that the belief that gender roles must be differentiated emanates from the construction of discourse, which is therefore passed downward through generations until it is accepted as being the right thing to do even by women themselves through the patriarchal rhetoric.

From the interviews one could tell that the discourse on patriarchy was prevalent in the way the participants were socialized. The women had to be submissive to men and the man is the head of the family, he is the one who takes care of the family and decides over everything. One participant's commented,

..... I am still finding problems to adapt my initial experiences are still sitting at the back of my mind even though unconsciously, but consciously I think I have some negative and positive adaptations too. My view of a woman has somehow changed from that time. I saw a woman as a house keeper, a bringer of happiness, who gathers her own happiness and her own well being, so I saw a woman as one who could only bring peace and stability in a home.... and to please her husband and a woman's role was limited to the kitchen and the household activities. Even now here in Norway I still do more of the home activities and I get some help from the girls and to admit, it's very strange for me to sit down while my husband is cooking.

This early construction of knowledge with regards to gender roles still impacts on how the women view gender roles in their new host culture. Daisy contributed by saying,

...that thing of being a man and a woman at the same time is drastic and its traumatizing. Even when I talk with my friends they all say that they miss being made to feel like a woman like the kind of relation that we have with the African men is totally different from the kind of relationship we have with the Norwegian men. That is why the women here want equality because they do everything the man is supposed to do so they don't see why they should be placed in the position of a woman because they can do whatever they are doing. In Africa it is different because usually as women we stay at home and take care of the home and kids and the man is out working and taking care of the bills and taking care of you and the kids and everything. So when you come here you have to adjust and work hard to take care of the bills. You have a responsibility to contribute and meet all the needs; it's difficult and the jobs are so difficult and frustrating.

Whilst feminism in general aims at challenging the patriarchal structures that subjugate women and keeps them subordinate, there is a need to examine it within the cultural context, in this case the African context.

Whichever way the discourse on gender roles is portrayed in the Norwegian context, the findings revealed that some African women in this study still face some challenges in finding the balance between the Norwegian culture and their original culture. The perspectives of the women in this study indicate that gender equality needs to be understood within the context of culture. On the other hand one of the participants found the Norwegian discourse on gender liberating and empowering. By migrating to Norway and getting the opportunity to develop herself, one of the participants points out that she felt empowered to break away from an abusive marriage of many years. Moving to Norway provided a much desired platform to venture into life on her own. This goes in line with Belenky and Stanton (2000)'s argument that to participate in discourse individuals need to be empowered.

#### **6.4 Language Learning Through Formal and Informal learning in the host culture**

Adaptation to a new culture entails the learning of that culture's language in order to participate in the activities of that society. Language is one of the main barriers to inclusion and to understanding the way of life of the host culture. Whilst the basic means of enculturation in one's original culture is language it is also the basic means in re-socializing the acculturating adults in a new culture (Berry, et. Al.1987). According to Taft (1987), and Rotter (1982), there are certain psychological characteristics that can determine how people learn the language and acquire cultural competence. Individuals have to be motivated to learn, have confidence in themselves and trust those people around them. The women in this study had to therefore make a standpoint to change the situation they were in and decided to attend Norwegian language courses in order to get jobs and embark on academic endeavors and to participate in the larger society. This requires a certain degree of confidence in their part.

The participants report that in the effort to identify with the culture they made a decision that they would begin to study Norwegian. Because of lack of language skills the participants' interaction with the environment was limited in the beginning to the other immigrants or members of their community who could speak their language or English. The participants mentioned that this left them with a feeling of marginality as they felt that they were not included in the Norwegian society. In the company of ethnic Norwegians the women report that they would remain silent because they did not know how to speak and express themselves in Norwegian and this discourse of silence was often misconstrued as signifying lack of knowledge as will be shown in the forthcoming section on self-development.

The findings of the study revealed that the need to belong and to identify with the host society was very strong among the participants. Identity is a reflection of the relationship that is established between an individual and the group where that individual lives through the interaction with the environment. Phinney, et. Al. (2001), posit that to become part of the larger society is an important goal among immigrants and that if this is achieved it contributes to their mental well-being. This desire to become part of the host society will be thwarted if the immigrants face rejection as they endeavor to fit in.

This phenomenon emerged in the findings of this study where the women felt that their efforts to fit in the Norwegian society were met with rejection if one was not able to speak the Norwegian language fluently. Vygotsky (1978), asserts that individuals construct their understanding of learning based on the social and cultural context of experience. Without the language skills the participants could not gain access into their host society and culture.

Although the decision about when to begin to study the language was determined by variables mentioned in the previous section, for all the participants the motivation to study the Norwegian language was both instrumental and integrative (Berry, et. Al.,1987). Instrumental in the sense that as most had careers from their home countries they could get better jobs other than the labor intensive ones they had gotten when they arrived if they acquired the necessary language skills. For some of them there was a strong desire to learn the language and begin to participate in the educational process of self-development. Their motivation was integrative in the sense that there was a desire to understand the culture, interact with the members of the society and be included. These two quotes from Jill and Daisy confirm the reason to learn the Norwegian language,

....it was very difficult; sometimes you tend to buy the wrong things. It was very difficult to just figure out simple things and some urgent letters were sent home needing some urgent response but we didn't understand, and we needed someone to translate, it was difficult.

....in the beginning it was difficult because during that time my husband had to translate everything. You feel very handicapped because there is nothing you can understand when you were alone. You become so dependent Its different from an English country because here everything is in Norwegian.... learning Norwegian helped me to mix and mingle with the people of the community, because they are not sociable, when you don't speak Norwegian because nobody wants to translate. Some of them are not willing to speak in English. So it's very difficult to communicate, they don't want to speak with you because you don't speak Norwegian.

The findings revealed however that although one of the reasons why the participants felt motivated to learn Norwegian was to find a better job, this has not been achieved for many of them. From the ten participants that I interviewed, two are working within the fields of their specialty they were educated in. One is a nurse and the other one is working in the field of tourism. These two participants are the only ones who felt that they had achieved the goal of getting a better job by pursuing language studies and self-development.

One of the four components of Rotter's (1982), social learning theory discussed in chapter three, suggests that expectancy is the probability whether a given behavior will result in a certain outcome or reinforcement. People will engage in the behavior which they have high expectations of getting the desired outcome. The behavior in this case is studying and the outcome is getting a better job and being included in the society. The women in this study have taken language courses in the hope of getting better paying jobs to improve their quality of life, to find a voice and avoid being second rate citizens which they feel they were at the time this study was conducted. Rotter warns however that the probability of expectancy is subjective in that individuals can over or under estimate the outcome and this can be problematic resulting to feelings of dejectedness, rejection and stress as was also reported in this study.

One of the participants felt let down by the system and she harbors bitter feelings, she has studied Norwegian and is fluent in it, she also holds two degrees which she attained in the Norwegian system but she is still working in an old people's home. Her goals have not been achieved yet. She has lived in Norway for over eighteen years. Although she feels this way she mentions also that she has not lost the will to fight. She feels that language is being used to exclude immigrants from participating in the wider society. She had this to contribute,

....no matter how much you learn you cannot get the job which you were trained to do. I am saying this from experience, I did my first and second degrees here, but it did not prepare me for any job, I had a will and passion to work for what I was trained for. The language course does not prepare you for any work either at the moment, but just to mix and mingle with Norwegian speaking people. You can have an interview well prepared. Without any mistakes in one sentence but they don't employ you. I felt language did not prepare me for any professional jobs.

The exclusion from participation in the larger society has left two other participants in the study with skepticism on whether they will get good jobs even after finishing their language course and higher education. Mono mentioned that she did not feel that she would get any good job even after she finished her language course because she did not think she could ever be able to be perfect in the Norwegian language, a condition which she thinks is put in place to exclude immigrants from getting better jobs and hinders immigrants' socio-economic integration into the larger society. She pointed out,

....I don't see myself learning Norwegian to the point of being fluent in it, yes I will be able to read, write and speak but it will take me many years to speak it flawlessly. This is what they say you must do if they will employ you isn't it? This thought gives me a feeling of helplessness and sometimes I become so stressed and become physically sick and have to go to the doctor, it's a hopeless situation. I am discouraged; I am just studying but.....

Mono also expressed that she has minimal contact with the Norwegian people as she is married to a man from her country. She also does not have any Norwegian friends. She speaks English or her mother tongue with her children at home. This is a hindrance for her to practice the Norwegian skills she learns at school. She mentioned that at her school Norwegian students keep to themselves and she does not know how to force herself into a group who do not seem to be willing to include her, so she is together with other English speaking students at her school. This makes her progress slow in her learning of the language.

The findings of this study revealed that most of the participants did not consider learning the Norwegian language as having taken any of their identity. The participants mentioned that they felt that living in a foreign culture had changed them to a certain extent but they still felt they belonged to their cultures. One participant's points out,

... my identity will never be taken away I am who I am and I will never be a Norwegian no matter what happens. Learning Norwegian did not take away any of my cultural values. It's just that personally I am a bit conservative; it's not easy when you are coming from a cultural background like mine.

Some of the participants have experienced the loss of the mother tongue and the English language, which they acquired growing up. Frida commented that when she spoke her mother tongue, or English she found that Norwegian words popped up. Jill found the fact that she must speak Norwegian language with her child who has mastered Norwegian instead of her mother tongue frustrating. She feels that,

....the language has challenged me so much, on my son's side. He has been robbed of his mother tongue and culture; right now he knows that mum understands a little bit of Norwegian. In the past he used to mix and make me understand my language and Norwegian. This Norwegian culture really clashes with my cultural values. When I came here you know I had cultural values, that is we used to share problems, mingling with friends but here you have to mind your own business.... breaking through into the culture is very hard. What you do and say is not culturally accepted in other cultures.



This quote from Jill brings me to the aspect of culture in the Norwegian language school. After the examination of the relevant documents and the content in the school, the findings showed that the content taught to the immigrants covers the necessary studies on the activities that go on in the Norwegian society. The content covered things like what goes in the school, politics, and the Norwegian everyday life, what goes in the homes, the food culture and the history of Norway, music and art. Although the Norwegian culture is reflected in the books it is not enough to equip the students to participate in the larger society based on just book knowledge. Language is more than just communication; it is a means for transmitting culture. Whilst the education covers speaking listening, writing and reading skills as well as grammar skills, that is to say, the learning at the school only covers the communication aspect not much emphasis is put on teaching the basic cultural aspect of language .

Zinzi commented on this phenomenon,

....I think I would like to understand the Norwegian culture more. It is different, like when one cracks a joke in Norwegian and being able to understand it. If somebody says a joke in Norwegian that is totally deep rooted in the Norwegian culture, when I will be capable of laughing at the same jokes as the Norwegians then I think I at that time I would be integrated. For now I have not reached that level I would say.

The interviews as well as the books analyzed showed that although reference is made to the students own cultures, this did not go deep and the participants did not feel that their cultural backgrounds were acknowledged. I observed that from the books I analyzed the mention of the students' culture comes at the end of each topic, when they are supposed to discuss how it is in their countries. During the interviews some of the participants reported that certain aspects from their cultural backgrounds were made reference to in the classroom. However, cultural differences were not acknowledged, thus giving rise to the idea of latent assimilation of immigrants into the Norwegian society rather than recognizing the differences and acknowledging them.

The findings also reflected that some of the participants did not find it a problem that they spoke Norwegian with a different accent. The participants were confident that the ethnic Norwegians understood that they were learning to master a language that is not theirs. However some of them felt threatened when they were asked to repeat what they said, if they said something in Norwegian in a not clear manner. For example Daisy and Jill remarked respectively,

.... I feel as if people are judging me when I am speaking. Like some Norwegians will ask you what you have said. I end up switching to English, I feel humiliated when that happens, but there are others who are helpful and are more than willing to help. All I want is that people understand that I am a foreigner and I need help to learn, we are not thriving for perfection.

....sometimes when you are speaking Norwegian, you say the whole sentence and when you are finished someone says "Hva?"(What?) And then you have to repeat the whole sentence again I find it so irritating and annoying and then I switch to English because I feel very unsure and less confident.

This difference here can probably be explained by the theory of Rotter (1982), which suggests that personality has much to do with how people learn as well as how they interpret the environment around them. For example Frida mentions that she made a conscious decision that she would not mind what people thought about the way she talked , she needed to find her voice, she likes to talk and she likes to express herself and speak out so she owed it to herself to learn Norwegian .The findings also showed that although the participants in this study learnt the basic vocabulary, reading and writing at the formal school they needed to practice their language skills outside in the society in order to be competent, confident and efficient in using the language.

Daisy and Olana, spent about four months in the Norwegian language class whilst Barbara and Frida spent about one and a half years and then they went into employment where they quickly learnt to speak the language confidently. Emelda reports the same trend and she mentions that although she studied for her first degree in Norwegian, she mastered the spoken language after having lived in Norway for eight years and being involved in the labor market. All these participants speak Norwegian confidently and fluently. This indicates that the interaction with the native speakers of Norwegian whilst practicing speaking it in the work place allowed the participants to learn the Norwegian language at a faster rate. This evidence is similar to that found by Ashcraft (2005), among the first generation Mexican immigrants in America who were able to increase their English skills by participating in community based activities and programs which enabled them to interact with the larger society thus contributing to the immigrants' socio-cultural, economic and political adaptation.

## **6.5 Influence of early schooling on self- development in the new culture**

In crossing the borders and coming to Europe, the participants in this study found themselves in an environment where they could participate in self-development. Frida, Emelda, Olana, Barbara and Daisy report that after learning the language they began their education which they took in Norwegian the rest of the participants took their education in English. The participants in this study all had a desire to develop their and so they took advantage of the opportunities that were offered in Norway. The interviews showed that the socialization of the participants at home and in the school emphasized the importance of education. Because of the limited opportunities that their countries had to offer, some of the participants had been left with the desire to continue with further education, which they could not fulfill in their countries of origin. One of the participants mentioned that she had always wished for a university degree but could not get the opportunity to get it in her country. Therefore when she came to Norway, she was able to achieve that expectation. Jill had this to say,

...I wanted to be somebody, my dad said always you must read and take your school seriously. He would say, "You have an opportunity to study there are many who did not have that opportunity who wanted it so you must make use of it , and it is up to you to make the most of it and become somebody because education is very important and no matter how old you are you will need it and you will still use it and you will appreciate and try and do something" .

The women in this study had a strong desire to accomplish their goals and become successful. The need to transform themselves was very strong and this could be achieved through education. Transformative theory according to Mezirow (2000), suggests that there are three variables that impact on an individual's ability to engage in the transformative process, these are cultural norms, personal characteristics and life circumstances. Transformative learning also depends on particular environmental and cultural forces at work in individuals' life (Daloze 2000). The data presented in the preceding chapter shows that the arguments by these researchers hold as the following discussion will illustrate. For some of the women the motivation to take further education was to improve the quality of life as discussed earlier. This is a thread that evidently begins with the socialization process when the women were children and continues through their life until the dream to get further education is realized after the event of moving to Norway.

One of the participants reports that she felt the need to take further studies because as a child she had observed a relative who had a good job and a good life and she realized she could make a conscious decision to achieve the same for herself and her children if she got the opportunity. This phenomenon is in line with the standpoint feminist theory which suggests that when women make up their minds to change their situations for the better they make a stand point (Hartsock, 1987). Having a mentoring community and having the opportunity to commit to the action of transforming oneself are among the four conditions mentioned by Daloz (2000), that lead to transformative learning. All the women in this study took the opportunity that was offered by the Norwegian educational system and they were more than committed to take further education.

Some of the participants reported that they felt the need to know more, they questioned certain assumptions that they had believed as children and needed to get more knowledge. One of the participants reports that she always admired people with more education than hers, when they engaged in discussions she felt that she was left out. She thus made a conscious decision to change this state of affairs. Mezirow (2000), terms this state critical reflection where an individual questions the previously acquired assumptions and feels the need to better themselves. Since the women came to Norway with a vision of a productive life, they needed therefore to find voice to be critical in meeting those expectations through education. They report that this reflective discourse drove the desire to transform themselves from a position of silence and invisibility to one of being seen and acknowledged in their new environment.

However when the process of taking that further education began the women faced a multitude of challenges as they were immersed in a system of education that put emphasis on the constructivist epistemology as opposed to what they were accustomed to. Mezirow (2000), notes that all individuals have frames of references, which are meaning structures based on cultural and contextual experiences.

As discussed earlier all the women in this study had their frame of reference from the objective knowledge acquired within the formal learning environment from their countries. The women had to adjust to the Norwegian way of teaching and learning. They were awakened to the fact that the discourse of silence was not rewarded in the Norwegian system, they had to learn to find the voice of being critical and question the knowledge they were getting in the construction of their new self. Coming from cultures that emphasized objective learning this was a hard road for most of the participants to travel.

The findings show that the participants had challenges in speaking out loud in the classroom during discussions and as well as in adjusting to group activities. Interaction with the other members of the group was always a challenge as the participants felt that their views were not being recognized as relevant and useful. This is probably due to the fact that the women had been socialized to passive learning and could not contribute much and this led to a feeling of alienation and being marginal or it could also be a result of the classroom environment that is essentially not sensitized to cultural differences.

It needs to be mentioned that the education which the participants had attended formerly did not foster critical reflection since the teacher was always the one who always transferred the knowledge to the students. Therefore it was a challenge for the women to learn to participate in the reflective discourse. Belenky and Stanton (2000), argue that reflective discourse and critical thinking provide tools for development throughout adulthood and they assert that for learners to participate in reflective discourse there must exist feelings of trust, solidarity, security and empathy. According to the findings of this study, these conditions were missing in the new learning environment. Whilst the participants communicated easily with the members of their communities outside in the informal environment, in the formal environment this changed and it became difficult for them to participate.

The argument by Vygotsky (1978), that the community is significant in the learning process holds true in this case. Among the members of their community the participants found support and in the formal surroundings this support was lacking from the fellow students and the teachers. This also goes in line with Vygotsky's argument about the significant other, language and culture being instrumental in the processes of learning for individuals. Most of the women report that they were always silent in the classroom and the feeling of invisibility and being marginal was painful for them to deal with, as Olana points out,

.... you could see that they can speak out more easily than us. So sometimes you don't speak out, they mistake that for the lack of knowledge. And yet in this case it's just the matter of cultural differences... I felt frustrated in group activities as well because, sometimes you get people who might accept what you contributed and sometimes they don't even recognize you and your participation. You can contribute something which is correct but they don't accept it as a correct answer, so it's really frustrating.

The need to hold on to the style of teaching from their original countries was great for the women in the beginning. Barbara reported that many times she found herself just reading in order to pass the examinations without necessarily understanding the content. The women also expressed that they felt that the teachers in their countries had more control of the students in the classroom. Most of the participants felt that the learning atmosphere in Norway was more relaxed and they liked that they could relate to the teachers more easily than in their countries of origin.

.....It was important for me to do well in class, so yes the same way I memorized things to pass back home is the same way I did with the Norwegian language and myself development here as well. I wrote words on paper and I memorized them so as to remember them later I also tried to talk with people..... I found out that here you are free to say what you think in the classroom without being judged or labeled as being disrespectful. In my country you could not challenge a teacher or just speak up without being asked to speak then you would be disrespectful. There was also a lot of punishment. It appeared as if you are not actually learning for your own good, it was as if you are being forced to learn so it was not a nice experience, but here it is different. They make you understand that you are learning for your own good, you can be friends with the teacher, you don't need to be afraid of the teacher, it was strange for me at first but I felt it was a nice thing and I liked the free atmosphere, you can discuss with the teacher about other things not just school things.

The participants' views in this study are in line with the views of some of the participants' in Alfred's (2002), study among the British Caribbean women who expressed that although they liked the new host country's methods of teaching and the hands on approach they missed the traditional way of teaching from their own country. They felt that the professor or lecturer is supposed to be an expert in her/his subject, thus she or he must impart the knowledge to the students. However all the participants in this study acknowledge that after the first stages of adjusting to the new type of education had passed, they felt that their perspective towards constructivist epistemology had changed and they felt transformed in a way.

The findings suggest that although the participants were still holding on to the ways of knowing they learned when they were growing up in their home countries; they were changing their perspectives and adopting the constructivist epistemology as opposed to objective learning. This is in line with what Daloz (2000), Cranton (2006), and Mezirow (2000), suggests that, for transformation to occur there must be interaction with others who cause us to evolve and see things from different perspectives from what we are used to. Regardless of the hostile learning environment experienced by the women, the process of transformation occurred due to the fact that the women were of a clear mind that they wanted to learn, they wanted to develop themselves and they wanted to adapt positively to the Norwegian society and find voices to participate in the activities of the society. This on the part of the learner is (ibid), conducive to transformative learning.

As Daloz (2000), posits, experiences from childhood are deep rooted in us and they secure our personal identity such that when certain discourses are encountered later on in life, we can be able to handle them in a certain manner. In this case the immigrant discourse which is apparently present in the classroom, the discourses of them (immigrants) vs. us (ethnic) phenomenon can be dealt with through the discourse of silence, by the women. Therefore there is need for an alternative view on things with which individuals can compare and that the transforming individual must be empowered in order to engage in committed action to compare the former beliefs and the new beliefs in this case the way knowledge was transmitted to the individual then and now. One participant commented,

....the new system of education helped me to open up and be active in all my learning process than I was before. In my country, as a student you were supposed to sit down and listen whilst the teacher is lecturing and writing notes down but here you discuss and get involved in the lesson.

This quote from Emelda shows a behavioral shift to a positive stance towards the constructive epistemology. This shift could be due to the fact that the learners now move to knowing as being a dialogical process. The participants began to recognize the sources of former knowledge and to acknowledge where their ideas are rooted then they became aware on how to construct their own knowledge (Taylor, 2000b).

Participants began to see themselves not only through the lenses of their own experiences but through reflection of those experiences. This way they understood clearly who they are and in this way they could choose to be who they want to be and through learning they can achieve their goals (ibid). This phenomenon by and large reflects a positive direction towards transformative learning which by definition is a change of epistemology from behavioral to constructive that is emphasized in Norway where the women have settled and this therefore indicates positive adaptation into their new culture.

## **6.6 Strategies of adaptation and paving the way forward**

Migrating to a new country had different impacts to the different women in this study. Each woman had to find different strategies to cope to meet the demands and expectations of the new culture. The earlier discussion showed that the different reasons for migrating contributed to how the women handled the situation they found themselves in. The findings of the study reveal that the women experienced challenges to varying degrees and also adjusted in different ways and paces as will be discussed below.

### **6.6.1 Language Learning and Adaptation**

As discussed earlier all the women found the language barrier a very big challenge in the process of adaptation; however their determination helped them to go over that barrier and forge forward to adapt into the Norwegian culture. The women express that they felt that the language was being used to exclude them in the society. When all the women came to Norway they did cleaning jobs and they feel that they did not need to speak Norwegian in order to successfully carry out their duties in these jobs as the majority of the people doing these jobs were immigrants. The study by Fernandez-Ordonez (1998), among the Mexican immigrants living in Norway, revealed that language was not an ultimate requirement for getting gainful employment in Norway, especially in low profile jobs, Zinzi complained,



....there was another issue which was a bit irritating, to find a cleaning job and that you should speak Norwegian to get a cleaning job, and I think this is the frustration everyone has gone through.

Some of the participants mentioned that they found the idea of speaking to their children in Norwegian very challenging since they were not fluent in the language themselves. The participants also do not like the idea that their children have very low mastery of their mother tongue and for those with children born in Norway the children have no mastery of their mother tongue at all. The women mentioned that they overcame this challenge by learning the language.

One of the participants reported that she felt that Norwegian had replaced her knowledge of the other languages she was able to speak. S she mentions that when she speaks she remembers only Norwegian words. Espin (2006), observes that this is a common plight among immigrants. In moving to a new culture they must learn to live within two languages and learn to live in two social worlds, their own and the new cultures own. To create the new self, it is imperative that the immigrant must learn the language.

The findings also revealed that some of the participants found speaking Norwegian in a different accent very problematic and causing them to lose confidence to a certain extent. Speaking the language with a foreign accent puts one in a position that is less privileged and the participants felt that it draws attention to them somehow and this brings a feeling of discomfort, especially when they are asked to repeat sentences during a conversation with the native speakers.

Another participant felt that the education offered in the Norwegian language class was not enough to enable the women to participate effectively in the Norwegian society. Although the Norwegian history and some aspects of culture were taught, she did not feel that this connected to the real situation and realities out in the community.

### **6.6.2 Relationship with the children**

The system of bringing up children in Norway and in African cultures is different. The dimension of culture as suggested by Inglerhat and Norris (2003), indicates that there are pronounced differences that can present challenges for parents. Values that are emphasized are different; whilst the African style of parenting is authoritarian the Norwegian parenting style puts emphasis on dialogue. In the African context (ibid), submissiveness and obedience are emphasized and there are no two way verbal exchanges between parents and children. The word of the parent is final.

Children are protected in the Norwegian system against any form of corporal punishment and immigrant parents live under the fear of being summoned to the (Barnevern Tjeneste) child protection services for child protection should they punish their children this way. Two women reported that they found this difficult to deal with. They felt that the state has too much authority in the matters between children and their parents. They felt that their children were out of control; caught up between two cultures as a result they got mixed messages. The parents strive to raise their children in the African cultural way but when the children are out of the home they learn the Norwegian culture. Parents thus feel that they lose control and this leaves them feeling confused and powerless. One of the women observed,

...Another thing is the family structure. I think the society has taken more of the responsibility from us who with the children, it's difficult to be a parent to your own children without outside forces intervening. I want to raise my children in an African cultural way. As an African child, he/she can be able to adapt to any society. If you became strict towards your own children you are called in to an office for a meeting, for me it's really frustrating. It's really frustrating.

### **6.6.3 Negotiating gender roles**

By migrating to a new culture all the ten participants in this study found themselves in a position of assuming new roles within the family. The women had to look for jobs to sustain their families in Norway and back home. As mentioned before these women had had high profile jobs in their home countries and none of them was working with manual labor. All of them were either professionals or were business women.

Although at an early age they had been socialized for hard work, and as children they had been socialized that the woman was the one responsible for taking care of the home as was presented in the findings chapter, the women had moved away from that and they owned houses in the city where they had house keepers who were responsible for the upkeep of their households. When they came to Norway the roles changed. They thus had to assume the role of taking care of the husband and the children. In the Norwegian culture it was not a possibility to get a house maid .This was a challenge for the women.

The egalitarian culture in the Norwegian society meant that both the husband and the wife had to take an active role in the house. The women report that this was a pleasant surprise although they admit that it was difficult for the women with husbands from their countries of origin who had to learn the new role of the man helping in the home. The interviews revealed that the women welcomed this change; however some felt that they did not get maximum help with the children, as they would have wished. The women learnt this aspect of the Norwegian culture by looking and observing how the Norwegians do it as suggested by Daloz (2000), that for transformation to occur there must be a mentoring community.

However there were participants like Emelda and Barbara who felt that they does not like that their husbands take an active role in the kitchen, (See discussion on Gender roles in the previous chapter). The independence that comes with gender equality as portrayed in the Norwegian culture was a challenge for Daisy. She reported that she found the idea of taking care of everything in the house being very frustrating for her and she preferred that her husband should actually take care of her. As mentioned before, how individuals are socialized determines how they view things. The women mentioned that they chose those aspects of the Norwegian culture which they found useful for them and they disregarded those that were in conflict with their culture. This is a phenomenon, which Berry (1997), defines as cultural integration where an individual is able to accept both cultures and be able to find the balance.

It can be argued however that although feminist perspectives in general have contributed greatly in the awareness of African women to demand recognition and challenge unfair patriarchal practices in their societies. Western feminism and African feminism are however worlds apart as the reference points between the two are different. While Western feminists emphasize individual female autonomy, African feminism challenges the marginalization of women in the capitalist oriented processes inherited from the colonial period (Mikell, 1997), and emphasizes culturally linked forms of public participation.

Therefore within the African context it is important that feminism and the African culture need not be viewed in opposition of each other. According to Tamale (2005), the institution of gender is constructed within the institution of culture and therefore it is imperative that the two must be harmonized for the good of the African women. The findings suggest that while the women appreciated the egalitarian structures provided by the Norwegian context they felt that they must find the balance between the two cultures, to preserve their culture.

However with that having been said the findings did suggest that 90% of the participants expressed that they had to find a way of juggling the conflicting roles in the family, during their period of studying, that is the roles of being a mother, a wife, a student and being in employment. Several of them expressed that they had to deal with the pressure and they struggled to meet the demands of fulfilling all these roles. These findings are in line with the findings By Merrill (1999), who found similar evidence among mature women students who were experiencing university life. Her findings also revealed that her participants experienced minimal support from their husbands with regards to taking care of children and this presented challenges for the mature women students in their efforts to study.

The women in this study reported that although their husbands were helping in the home they felt that the burden was mostly on their shoulders, this was reported by both groups, the women married to Norwegian men and those married to men from their countries of origin. This trend indicates the patriarchal tendencies, which point to specific traditional gender roles as being a norm within the homes of both studies. For the women in Merrill's and my study domesticity was a frequent constraint among the women as students and they found that they engaged in power struggles both at home and at school in order to be able to study.

## 6.7 Public discourse on Immigrants

An important finding emerging from the interviews was that the participants lived with the burden of how immigrants are portrayed in the media in Norway. The public discourse on immigrants does nothing to help integrating the Norwegian society into the immigrants. One of the women mentioned that she found it frustrating that most of the news that is reported about immigrants in the newspapers or the TV was the crimes committed by immigrants. She expressed that integration is a two way process but felt that in the Norwegian society focus was just placed on the immigrant to integrate to the Norwegian society not vice-versa.

She felt that instead of the Norwegian media dispelling the fear of immigrants by the Norwegian population it encourages the Norwegians to look at strangers with skepticism.

According to the Integrerings-og Mangfoldsdirektoratet (IMDI) yearly report (2009), on the portrayal of immigrants in the Norwegian media not much effort is being put to reconcile and integrate the ethnic population and the immigrants. The paper reports that in 2009 when the news articles on immigrants were evaluated, 71% of the news was problem oriented, 18 % was positively oriented to resourcefulness and 11 % was neutral. The paper reports that from the years 1976 to 2002 crime was the most discussed topic in the media. This trend stems from stereotyping and generalization of all immigrants.

The women expressed that this was a shadow cast in their own integration processes into the society. These findings were similar to the findings of the study by Spoonley and Butcher (2009), among the Asian immigrants in New Zealand that revealed that the discourse constructions by some communities were being reproduced through media reports which portrayed the Asian immigrants as being the threatening “other”. One of the participants shared an experience she had one day when she was asked by a Norwegian man how much she charged for her services. The woman says she did not know what the man was talking about until she realized that the man thought she was a prostitute. The woman expressed that she left the place where she had been waiting for her friend with a guilty feeling. Later though she told herself that the problem had nothing to do with her as a person but how women of African origin are portrayed by the media and the society in Norway so she moved on with her life,

... You have to be strong, otherwise you crack! .. She observed laughing.

This phenomenon may be a result of stigmatization as discussed by Fernandez-Ordonez (1998), who argues that stigmatization stems from the tendency of societies to categorize and stereotype individuals.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **7.0 Concluding Remarks and Recommendations**

In the section below I conclude the thesis by briefly highlighting some recommendations that can be employed to include the immigrants more in the larger society and to enable them to participate in satisfying employment, by giving a few examples of how other countries have tackled the issues of language learning and integration among immigrants.

#### **7.1 Conclusion**

The discussion above provides an understanding of the African women's strategies for seeking knowledge and how this impacts their adaptation processes in the Norwegian culture. The findings clearly demonstrated that the way the participants were socialized impacted their learning and their adaptation in the host culture.

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to all African women in Norway since the women do not have a homogenous culture but the study is to bring awareness and an understanding to the host culture as well as to bring and highlight to the women themselves, self awareness and self -appreciation as they put their experiences into words at the same time discovering how their counterparts have dealt with the issues in the new host society. The study has attempted to examine the dynamics at play in the adaptation of the women parallel to the theories discussed.

The findings of this study showed that the women have put some effort to adjust into the Norwegian culture and have adapted positively. Although the women experienced some challenges, they managed to overcome them and they were working towards or have achieved their goals. Most of the women are working albeit not in jobs that they would like to work with, however they have settled into comfortable lives. The study showed that understanding the Norwegian culture and world view has been a difficult journey for the women but as reflected by the findings progress is being made into looking at issues from the perspective of the host country as they negotiate differences in the cultures of origin and the new culture, this is an indicator of some degree of cultural integration into the society as it is defined loosely.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

Reflections on the aspect of language revealed that the language taught at the school on its own was not enough for the women to participate and function effectively in the larger society. To learn the language grammar, the vocabulary, the history and the culture of the host country is necessary in the classroom, but there is a need to put all that is learnt into practice in a real life situation.

This can be done by providing the students with on the job training for all immigrants who take part in the language course, not just for the few who register with the labor office (NAV) as it is done at present. In this way the Language courses could also address the issue of the immigrants getting satisfying employment in general which they are trained for, by directing language training to specific jobs this would be beneficial for both the state and the immigrants. The participants in this study reported that they felt that they acquired most of their vocabulary when they began employment, it is clear that the work environment provides a conducive arena where the immigrants can practice their language skills and this makes them feel included, which gives a sense of belonging.



Efforts to promote socio-economic integration among immigrants by creating innovative strategies as it is done in Canada, ( PPF,2008), by providing programs that support small organizations to provide paid internships to immigrants could also help. Paid internships will help provide the immigrants with much needed experience in the work place which the immigrants lack, while at the same time being able to provide for their families. This would be a motivating factor to continue with internships. This can also help the organizations who are skeptic towards the skills of the immigrants to gain trust whilst at the same time avoiding the risk of losing out on finances/profit due to added costs in the form of payment to the learners, since the interns would not be in their pay role. This innovation has been tried in the Canadian setting and has been successful. However research from other studies show that many immigrants who moved to Canada in the 1990's cannot work in highly paying jobs , like in Norway their credentials are discounted as being not up to the Canadian standards

From the findings of this study only one of the participants reported to have attended lessons similar to those that are provided by NAV. It was for the health personnel. I also analyzed some books that were directed for the immigrants working in the health sector employees learning the Norwegian language which seemed to be relevant and helpful for those in the health sector. The participant reports to have found it very helpful indeed. In the same vein, one of the participants was out of work because she was not in a position to do the labor-intensive jobs anymore because of her health, suffice to say there are many like her who are receiving social help from the government because they are on sick leave caused by the discomfort of doing less rewarding and low status jobs when they have good education and occupational skills which the employers find not transferable to the economic system in Norway. If immigrants were in employment they are qualified for they would be motivated to work and they would enjoy their jobs. Their status will be uplifted and so will be their self-confidence and esteem. They would not be a liability to the state by receiving social help or being on sick leave all the time. They would not feel excluded as some expressed in the interviews but will be productive members of the society it would be a win win situation for both the State of Norway and the immigrants themselves.

As discussed earlier, the most important tool for transmitting culture is language. Integrating cultural learning into language classes would be helpful for the learners of the Norwegian language. The women in this study all agree that even after learning the language up to level three, they still had problems to participate in normal social conversations over dinner for example, because they did not know what to say. In job interviews they were not able to sell themselves convincingly to the employers because they do not know the dynamics at play.

Language taught in the classroom alone is out of context; it does not give a real picture of what actually goes on in the real Norwegian culture even though real life examples are used. Although the immigrant language learners listen to cd's and so on still the characters are just fictitious for them. Thus lessons on culture need to be introduced to the language learners to equip them with the skills to integrate faster and easier into the host culture. The teaching of culture can result to a faster acceptance of the new culture. Methods of teaching that can place language in its context would be helpful, for example role playing, video watching, visits to real places, meeting real Norwegians in an informal situations not just the teacher and giving the students assignments that challenge students to go out and do some research on the host culture and meet real people would be a few of the examples of activities that can bring cultural experiences within the language courses.

Evidence from the study by Genc and Bada (2005), among the Turkish students aged 21-25 who were learning the English language combined with cultural studies showed that including cultural components in language training contributed greatly to improving the language skills of the students. Although the students were learning English as a second language in their own country it can be argued that the same concept could work among the immigrants learning the Norwegian language with the advantage that in Norway the immigrants are already immersed in the Norwegian Culture. According to Genc and Bada (2005), the speakers of a language need more than just grammatical competence to communicate effectively. The communication skills which fall outside the scope of grammar in the classroom situation are vital if the immigrants are to communicate effectively in the larger society. These are communication skills which come with the understanding of a particular culture.

The women in this study demonstrated a desire to move towards the constructivist epistemology, an action that is difficult to achieve within a short period of time when one was socialized into behavioral epistemology in the formal environment. African women in this study therefore need support to fit in the Norwegian classrooms. Trust and security among fellow students need to be established in the learning environment for this to happen. With increased immigration and globalization Norway has become a very multicultural society and thus the learning environment needs to be sensitized to these cultural differences, the same goes for the labor market.

Culture studies or immigrant studies addressing different cultures could be introduced in the curriculum early enough in the mainstream at secondary school level in an endeavor to integrate the Norwegians themselves to these new members of the society who have come to Norway to stay, to make the new generation more positive towards others who are different. Integration is a two way process where both cultures need to actively engage in activities that will bring awareness of the other's culture in an effort to live together amicably.

I argue that increased representation of immigrants in the media, that is, on television, radio and newspapers through positive articles and programs would help in changing the constructions of hostile and exclusionary discourses that exist due to negative portrayal of immigrants as the "other" versus "us". Positive reports in the media of immigrants as being part of and contributing rather than as being a threat and a danger to the society would go a long way into changing the current immigrant discourses among some ethnic Norwegians. Lessons can be learned from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation which initiated measures to introduce programs reflecting the diversity of the Canadian society (Spoonley & Butcher, 2009).

None the less the results of this study indicate that although the women have adjusted to their new host culture in a positive way, they were not satisfied with the type of employment they were in and it can thus be concluded that although they have adapted positively they have not yet socio-economically integrated but rather have integrated better socio-culturally into the Norwegian society. Granted the integration of immigrants in Norway in general seems to be heading in the right direction.

However without attempting to undertake the integration of immigrants' debate at this point it is needless to say that integration is a complex issue which has different meanings subject to who is arguing. It is therefore of utmost importance to handle it cleverly if both the ethnic and immigrant population should cohabit. Studies show that the not clearly thought out integration policies ( Minorities policies, Pillarization policies) employed in the Netherlands caused havoc within the Dutch society and are now viewed as failed policies much to the chagrin of all the actors (Entzinger, 2006).

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Informed Consent

### Title of Study:

Gender Equality and Culture: The Role of Formal and Informal education in language learning, the adaptation processes and self development of African women living in Oslo, Norway: Bridging the gap between Past and New experiences of Acquired Knowledge  
Principal Investigator: Marvis Bhehane Bordvik, Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education.

Institution: University of Oslo

Thesis Advisor Dr Rosah Malambo, Oslo University College

Research: this research aims to analyze the African immigrant women's learning experiences within their original and new cultures to find out how far the women draw from their early learning experiences in the acquisition of new knowledge in their self development and their adaptation to a new culture and society, and to explore the role of both formal and informal language learning in this adaptation process. The research design employed will be a case study where in-depth interviews will be done and a group of 10-15 women will be interviewed. Two Language teachers will be interviewed.

Participation: There will be two interviews divided into two parts each per person to allow for rich information and these will last about 45-60 minutes each. These will be audio taped unless if the interviewee requests otherwise. Additional clarification might happen via telephone or email. Privacy will be ensured through confidentiality. Participation is voluntary and the interviewee has the right to withdraw from the interview at any point should they so wish. A summary of the results will be available to participants upon request.  
Participant understands.

- I agree to participate in this study that I understand will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at the University of Oslo
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary
- I understand that all data collected will be limited to this use or other research-related usage as authorized by the University of Oslo
- I Understand that I will not be identified by name in the final product
- I am aware that all records will be kept confidential in the secure possession of the researcher and that when the research is finished all the recorded material will be deleted.
- Signature of interviewee                      Date                      Signature of interviewer

## **Appendix 2: The Interview guide for the participants**

My name is Marvis Bhehane Bordvik. I am a student at the University of Oslo doing a research on the experiences of African Immigrant women. I am hoping that this research will bring to light the African women's view on issues pertaining their past and new experiences in their adaptation in Norway and thereby help bring about self awareness and empowerment and also understanding on the part of the host society and culture and thus endeavors to make the adaptation and self development of African women better. The information in this study is for academic purposes only and will not harm you in any way. All correspondence and interaction will be treated with strictest confidence and you will remain anonymous throughout this study. It is your right to withdraw from the study should you so wish at any point in time and you can seek clarification if the need arises. You also have a choice to refuse to answer certain questions which you feel uncomfortable with. I hope you have understood what this research is about and all that pertains to it. Are you in a position to answer the interview questions?

### **Interview 1 a. Experiences in the country of origin with family, friends, community and the society at large: Informal learning**

- **Research question 1.** How do African immigrant women describe their early learning and development experiences in their country of origin and later in Norway?

- **Research questions 2**

How do culture and early schooling socialization influence immigrant women's adaptation and how have their learning experiences contributed to their socio-cultural, economic, or cultural adaptation?

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) What is your country of origin?
- 3) How long have you lived in Norway?
- 4) What is your marital status?
- 5) If you are married or have been married, what is the country of origin of your husband?
- 6) Do you have any children? If yes How many?
- 7) What was the reason for migrating to Norway?/Immigrant status?
- 8) Could you describe the informal things you learnt outside the school when you were growing up in your country?
- 9) Could you describe in your opinion how the experiences you obtained from your country helped you or hindered you from adapting well in the Norwegian society and culture?

- 10) How have these experiences impacted you in your adult life and eventually your adapting to a new country and in yourself development?
- 11) Do you have some formal schooling which you obtained from your country of origin before you came to Norway?
- 12) Could you kindly describe the kind of formal education you had and your experiences during your primary, high /secondary school and college years? Describe how it was like to study there, your expectations, the expectations of your family and teachers.
- 13) Were you able to reach your educational aspirations in your country of origin? And could you elaborate on that?
- 14) If you were in employment before you came to Norway could you describe what you worked with and how it was at your work place?

**Interview no 1b. Migrating to Norway. Experiences in a new country, learning to survive and coping with culture through Formal and informal learning**

- 16 Could you describe your expectations when you first came to Norway if you had any prior expectations?
- 17 Could you describe your experiences when you came to a new culture, how did you cope? Discuss network issues, job and first impressions-survival; were there particular strategies that you employed that helped you to survive? Network, maybe family or members of the community from your country of origin.
- 18 Did you feel that you had to make drastic changes in your life when you first came to Norway? Could you elaborate?
- 19 Were you able to get a job related to the one you had in your country? Or one that you had acquired education for can you tell me about the job you have now?
- 20 Have you at one point relied on the education you acquired from your country to survive in the new culture? Formal or informal?

**Interview no 2a. Language Courses and Work situation in Norway, self-development and further education**

- **Research Question 3.** What formal and informal language-learning activities have the immigrant women participated in since coming to Norway?



- **Research question 4.** What are the challenges faced by African immigrant women in the endeavor to adapt to the Norwegian culture and what strategies do African women use to manage expectations of their host culture in order to meet their goals of personal development?

- 21 Did you attend any Norwegian Language Courses?
- 22 How much time did you spend in learning the Norwegian Language if you have done so i.e. which level did you attain? And do you feel that you had enough time of Norwegian tutoring?
- 23 Were you paying for your Norwegian Language course and if so how much did it cost?
- 24 Could you describe your experiences during Norwegian class?
- 25 During your language course did you fall back on the former knowledge you acquired in your country of origin? Did you experience any major differences in the way your teacher taught you and what you were used from your country? Could you share your feelings on how the language class went did you share your experiences from your country with the classmates and the teacher?
- 26 Do you feel that the language training you got helped you to get a respectful job you are satisfied with?
- 27 Do you feel that going to Norwegian class contributed to your adapting to the Norwegian culture and society?
- 28 When you finished language lessons did you feel that you were better equipped to work and be integrated in the society?
- 29 Do you feel that you mastered all your Norwegian Language skills at the language school, when you began to work or by interacting with people in the community through informal use of language?
- 30 Do you feel that learning Norwegian has taken some of your cultural identity?
- 31 Do you find speaking in Norwegian with a foreign accent problematic for you in the community among friends or at work?
- 32 What do you think about equality among man and women the way it is in Norway
- Interview 2 b Self-development and further education**
- 33 Did you attempt to take further education other than the language course for self development?

- 34 How difficult was it for you to secure further education?
- 35 If you furthered your education could you please describe your experiences in the school/college you went to?
- 36 Did you discover major differences or similarities in the styles of teaching and learning between the Norwegian colleges and colleges from your country? Could you elaborate if you have experience in this respect?
- 37 How did you cope in the classroom?
- 38 Did you feel that you were invisible for some reason? Could you elaborate?
- 39 How did you experience group activities, group assignments and open discussions?
- 40 Did you share your former learning experiences in your classes, or did you feel that your former competencies were acknowledged?
- 41 How would you say your early learning experiences outside school and in school have influenced how you have adapted to the Norwegian culture?
- 42 Do you feel that you have been afforded an opportunity for further development to your satisfaction in education and respectable job acquisition subsequently, could you elaborate?
- 43 What has been your biggest challenge in the adaptation to the Norwegian culture and society?

Thank you for answering my questions.

### **Appendix 3: Interview Guide for language teachers for adult immigrants**

My name is Marvis Bhehane Bordvik. I am a student at the University of Oslo doing a research on the experiences of African Immigrant women. I am hoping that this research will bring to light the African women's view on issues pertaining their past and new experiences in their adaptation in Norway and thereby help bring about self awareness and empowerment and also understanding on the part of the host society and culture and thus endeavors to make the adaptation and self development of African women better.

The information in this study is for academic purposes only and will not harm you in any way. All correspondence and interaction will be treated with strictest confidence and you will remain anonymous throughout this study. It is your right to withdraw from the study should you so wish at any point in time and you can seek clarification if the need arises. You also have a choice to refuse to answer certain questions which you feel uncomfortable with. I hope you have understood what this research is about and all that pertains to it. Are you in a position to answer the interview questions?

1. How did you learn to teach adults from other cultures?
2. In your opinion, is the content that is taught to immigrants enough to equip them for survival skills in the society and to find jobs?
3. Do you discuss the different cultures of your students and their problems in class and also the Norwegian culture?
4. Could you share with us your experiences in the teaching of language to immigrants?
5. Do you notice marked behavior differences between your female students from Africa and their male counterparts?
6. Are there any differences in participation?

Thank you for answering my questions.

## Appendix 4: Permit to carry out Research

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS  
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Harald Hårfagres gate 29  
N-5007 Bergen  
Norway  
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17  
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Rosah Malambo  
Avdeling for sykepleierutdanning  
Høgskolen i Oslo  
Postboks 4 St. Olavs plass  
0130 OSLO

Vår dato: 26.08.2009

Vår ref: 22340 / 2 / RKH

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

### KVITTERING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 17.07.2009. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 24.08.2009. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

22340	<i>Gender Equality and Culture. The Role of Formal and Informal Education and Language learning in the Adaptation Processes and self Development of African Women Living in Oslo, Norway: Bridging the Gap between past and new Experiences of acquired Knowledge</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	Høgskolen i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Rosah Malambo
Student	Marvis Bhehane Bordvik

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, vedlagte prosjektvurdering - kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/-helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

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

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.05.2010, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Bjørn Henrichsen

Ragnhild Kise Haugland

Kontaktperson: Ragnhild Kise Haugland tlf: 55 58 83 34

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Marvis Bhehane Bordvik, Seljevn. 5, 1929 AULI

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:

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

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TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 35. nsdmaa@svt.uit.no

## Appendix 5    Budget

### BUDGET FOR RESEARCH ITEMS

Item	Quantity	Total (Kroner)
1. Olympus LS-11 PCM Recorder	1	5 000,-
2. Macintosh Laptop (inkl. programs)	1	15 000,-
3. Canon MP 640 Printer	1	1 900,-
<u>4. Transport (tickets)</u>	<u>3(2000)</u>	<u>6 000,-</u>
Total .....	kr	27 900,-