



Master's Thesis:
Immigration and Work Integration of US- Americans in
Norway

Amanda Erika Boysen

15 May 2019

Table of Contents:

Abstract:	4
1 Introduction	5
1.1 American Immigration and Employment in Norway	5
1.2 A Discussion of Terms.....	6
1.3 Labor integration in Norway.....	8
1.5 Research Questions	10
2 Theoretical Framework	11
2.1 Ager and Strang’s (2008) Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework	11
2.2 Spencer and Charsley’s Effectors for Integration (2016)	13
3 Methods	14
3.1 Study design.....	14
3.2 Selection Criteria.....	15
3.3 Recruiting.....	16
3.4 Semi- Structured Interviews.....	16
3.5 Collection of Data, Transcription, and Coding.....	17
3.6 Analysis.....	18
3.7 Ethics.....	19
3.8 Limitations	20
4 The Informants	21
4.1 Basic Demographic Info about the Informants	21
4.2 Introduction to the Informants	23
5 Results	26
5.1 Work Situations: the quality of work and status as a worker.....	26
5.1.1 Precarious Work.....	27
5.1.2 Acceptance of Qualifications	28
5.1.3 Shame and Underemployment	31
5.1.4 Work Environments	33
5.1.5 Working in Management.....	37
5.1.6 Accountability.....	37
5.1.7 Culture at the Workplace	38
5.2 Belonging	39
5.2.1 Language and Work	40
5.2.2 Socializing at Work and in the Community	42
5.2.3 Language and Confidence.....	44
5.2.4 A Shift in Confidence.....	46
5.2.5 Proximity to imagined future	50
5.3 Being in Limbo	52
5.3.1 Overqualified yet not Qualified Enough	52
5.3.2 A “different” kind of immigrant	54
5.3.3 Personal Identification: A Confusion of Terms	57
5.3.4 Perceived Discrimination	60
5.3.5 The Effect of Witnessing Discrimination	62
5.4 Evolution of Status and Identity.....	63
5.4.1 Immigration and Rights.....	64
5.4.2 Vulnerabilities of Immigrants	65

5.4.3 A Change in Status	66
5.4.4 Finances in Norway.....	68
5.4.5 Shift in priorities	70
5.4.6 Values: A Meaningful Career	72
5.4.7 Identity Transformation	73
6 Discussion and Conclusion	76
6.1 Discussion	76
6.1.1 Employment as a Mean for Integration.....	76
6.1.2 Social Connection, Effectors for Integration and Belonging	79
6.1.3 Privileged yet Disadvantaged.....	80
6.1.4 Identity and Status.....	82
6.2 Conclusion	84
7 References:	86
8 Appendix:	89
8.1 Interview Guide.....	89

Abstract:

The aim of this study was to uncover the ways in which US- American immigrants to Norway experience the integration and immigration process, particularly in the domain of employment. I collected stories from informants in the form of nine semi-structured interviews which took place in the fall of 2018. Using narrative analysis, I evaluated the ways in which these individuals represented their experiences. The informants, who came to Norway without the security of employment, described their experiences obtaining work and participating in the Norwegian labor market, as well as their overall experience integrating into Norwegian society. Findings show the important role of employment for the integration of the informants and aligned with previously determined “effectors” for integration including language skills, social connections, as well as societal structures and the role of discrimination. I document a linkage between self-confidence and social status, language skills, and employment/ economic status. Furthermore, this research addresses the ways in which informants connect their immigration experience to a shift in their values and identity.

1 Introduction

1.1 American Immigration and Employment in Norway

There is a long, and well-known history of immigration from Norway to the United States. In the 50 years between 1865 and 1915, nearly 600,000 people left Norway to settle in the United States. (Semmingen, 1960) Throughout the 19th century and up to World War I, a third of Norway's population emigrated. However, this changed in the late 1960s and since then, Norway has seen a decrease in emigration and a significant increase in immigration. (T. H. Eriksen (2013) Among those immigrants are a small number of US- Americans. According to Statistisk Sentralbyrå (SSB)¹, there are 9,033 US- American immigrants in Norway as of January 1, 2019. This accounts for 0.17% of the Norwegian population and 1.18% of the immigrant population in Norway. (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019d)

The majority of US- American immigrants come to Norway on a family reunification visa (39.0%), closely followed by employment visas (34.5%), and student visas (24.1%), in 2017. (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2018) Those who come to Norway without the security of employment, are met with a complicated landscape of barriers to finding work. Although the majority do find employment in Norway (67.4% for persons between 20-66 years of age)² and are on par with the Norwegian immigrant population as a whole (66.6%), (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019b) they continue to struggle to find work which aligns with their previous work experience and education. This underutilization of skilled workers is detrimental to Norwegian society, particularly because there are whole industries significantly lacking workers in Norway. (Kalstø, 2019)

This project aims to shed light on this issue through the collection of narratives of a group of US- American immigrants. These narratives describe the obstacles they have faced regarding employment, status as an immigrant, a shift in status and confidence, as well as deeper issues of the integration experience such as the transformation of identity and values.

¹ an independent organization which gathers its data from over 100 public registries in Norway

² This category includes North America and Oceania. However, however, the majority of these individuals come from the United States (68.1 % vs. Canada 15.2% and Australia 12.4%) (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019d)

1.2 A Discussion of Terms

The Sapir- Whorf hypothesis asserts that language is the framework through which individuals arrange information and create analyses. There are significant interconnections between language, culture, and psychology; individuals can be seen as prisoners to the structures of their native languages. Throughout history, linguistic patterns and cultural norms have developed in parallel, constantly influencing each other. (Whorf, 1997) Understanding this established principle of the interconnectivity of language and culture, I will discuss the terms immigrant and foreigner, and their Norwegian counterparts, *innvandrere*, and *utlending*, while acknowledging the link that exists between cultural norms and linguistics. Additionally, I will also discuss the rationale behind using the highly contested term “integration,” when referring to the process which immigrants face in the time after the move to their new home.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines immigrant as, “A person who has come to live permanently in a country that is not their own.” (Hornby, 2015) A Norwegian dictionary, *Norsk Ordbok med 1000 illustrasjoner*, defines the Norwegian word *innvandrere* as an individual who comes from abroad to settle down for good- “*kommer fra utlandet for å slå seg ned for godt.*” (Guttu, 2005) When it comes explicitly to official definitions, the two terms are comparable.

Another term which is often used in conjunction with migrants who come to Norway, is the word *utlending*. An *utlending* is defined as a person from another country- “*en person fra et annet land.*” (Guttu, 2005) This is similar to the English word foreigner, which is defined as, “*a person who comes from a different country.*” (Hornby, 2015) The terms foreigner and *utlending* are fairly equivalent in their definitions.

Despite the relative similarity of the definitions of these two words in English and Norwegian, the use of the terms often deviates from their official definitions. Within the academic sphere, the use of these terms generally aligns with their definitions. However, up until 1994, the term *innvandrerbefolkning* (immigrant population) was used both in academia and in broader society to refer to immigrants and their decedents, even if they were born in Norway and had Norwegian citizenship. (Dzamzrija, 2008) Additionally, there has been a move away from differentiating between first- generation and second- generation immigrants, SSB has moved

to use the term *innvandrere* only for those who were born outside of Norway to non-Norwegian parents and have themselves immigrated to Norway. This term is used for all individuals who immigrated, regardless of their background and reason for their immigration. (Dzadzadzija, 2008) However, previous definitions and use of these terms have not entirely left the Norwegian lexicon.

An example of a force pushing back against the misuse of such terms is NRK (the Norwegian government-owned media organization). NRK has created guidelines for their reporting, with the help of NGOs, academic researchers, and religious organizations. These guidelines, created for their reporters, aim to raise awareness about whether certain terms are stigmatizing or neutral. (Niemi, 2001) The *Svartelista* (Blacklist) was first created in 1999 but was updated in 2014 and renamed *NRKs flerkulturelle ordliste* (NRK's multicultural word list). In the foreword of this list, NRK's outlines their goal to move toward language which is more inclusive. (T. G. Eriksen & Bolstad, 2014)

Among the words which are to be “used with care,” are both *innvandrere* and *utlending*. (T. G. Eriksen & Bolstad, 2014) They cite SSB's definition for *innvandrere* (immigrant), as being “persons born abroad of two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents,” (Dzadzadzija, 2014) and point out that this word should not be used when referring to individuals who were born in Norway and have Norwegian citizenship. There is a recognition that the term is often misused society, often being used to describe a much larger portion of the population that the definition allows. (Hagelund, 2010) Furthermore, Eriksen and Bolstad (2014) point out that the word *utlending* (foreigner) should only be used to describe tourists or foreigners who live in Norway no longer than six months. Although these are common Norwegian words and their classifications relevant to describe their populations, ethnopolitical awareness has made it clear that word choice is associated to politics, and in turn a significant factor in the integration of minority groups. (Niemi, 2001)

Another term used throughout this paper is integration. The definition of which has been highly disputed without a concrete and widely accepted definition. However, the idea of integration has been widely used and touted as a policy goal. (Robinson, 1998) Its' use in academia is contested, in part because it insinuates that an individual must “assimilate” and become an indistinguishable part of the existing society. There has been significant discussion in the academic community about replacing the term with other more inclusive

terms such as acculturation, incorporation, inclusion, etc. (Favell, 2010) Spenser and Charsley authored one of the primary theoretic frameworks used in the development of this research project. They argue for their continued use of the term by explaining that although not ideal, there is a *“need for a mutual vocabulary with which to engage critically with existing academic and policy discourses.”* (Spencer & Charsley, 2016, p. 3)

In this research project, I will categorize to the informants with term “immigrant.” I define my group of informants (US- American born citizens who live and work in Norway) as immigrants while recognizing that some of them might not be considered immigrants because they are uncertain of their intention to stay in Norway in the long term. I use the term “integration” to refer to the complex process which occurred when the informants moved to Norway. Through this research, I aim to give voice to these individuals who grapple with their experience with their perceived definitions of these terms, as well as their overall experience living and working in Norway.

1.3 Labor integration in Norway

Employment is a vital piece of the integration process. (Bloch, 1999) However, as an immigrant, there are barriers to finding employment, particularly when it comes to finding work which matches with previous experience. Factors related to this include the recognition of qualifications, barriers in language, and other lacking skills, which often leave immigrants vulnerable to precarious work positions. This section will give context to this topic through a describing of the context of integration for immigrants into the Norwegian labor market.

Norway is a social democratic country, and its egalitarian culture leaves an impression on the way in which the labor market operates. The Norwegian labor market is highly regulated, with significant worker rights provisions. (Olsen & Kalleberg, 2004) These provisions provide employees with generous social benefits including extended parental leave, paid sick leave, vacation, subsidized childcare, etc. (Arbeidstilsynet, 2019) The paradox is, that a country having such generous leave arrangements and worker rights creates a necessity for a temporary workforce to substitute for the regular workers which are on leave. (Olsen & Kalleberg, 2004) There has been increased use of temporary staffing in Norway over the past decade. Vulnerable groups, such as immigrants often fall into these positions. These temporary positions often lack worker protections for these vulnerable individuals. (Friberg,

2016) Temporary work falls under the category of precarious, defined as *“uncertain, unpredictable and risky [work] from the point of view of the worker.”* (Kalleberg, 2009) Immigrants often find themselves in precarious work situations because their qualifications are not recognized, they lack skills, or the connections to aid in the search for full- time contracted positions.

One of the primary factors which determine labor integration for immigrants is the recognition of the qualifications they have previously obtained. In 2003, NOKUT (Nasjonalt Organ for Kvalitet i Utdanningen) was established, simplifying the process of receiving recognition for foreign higher education in Norway. (Liebig, 2009) Not only does NOKUT assess foreign higher education, but it also evaluates the quality of Norwegian universities and other colleges and vocational training. (Langfeldt, Harvey, Huisman, Westerheijden, & Stensaker, 2008) Just over one- half of the cases submitted to NOKUT receive recognition for their equivalence to Norwegian degrees, at times this can mean that a master’s degree is given the equivalence of a Norwegian bachelor’s degree. However, this is more of an issue with degrees from non- OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. (Liebig, 2009) Furthermore, this recognition only determines the amount or level of education that the applicant has achieved, individual universities and higher education institutions determine whether or not the degree aligns with the subject area of their equivalent Norwegian programs. (Langfeldt et al., 2008) Regulated professions are subject to further evaluations by respective professional bodies. This issue extends beyond the scope of official accreditation. Norwegian education has been shown to be of higher value in the Norwegian labor market. (Liebig, 2009)

1.4 Why this population?

Although they are small in number, US- American immigrants are a relevant population to study because they been overlooked in previous research. Furthermore, they are often categorized with other immigrant groups which do not face the same obstacles for their immigration. For example, in research by SSB, they are often lumped together with members of western EU states. (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019a)

US- American immigrants are “voluntary migrants. This term is used to describe individuals who choose to move from one country to another, in contrast to individuals who are pushed to

migrate for reasons out of their control (e.g. refugees, asylum seekers). (Lassetter & Callister, 2009) The majority of US- American immigrants come to Norway on a family reunification visa, however, because they come from outside the EU, they must navigate some bureaucratic hurdles and have vulnerabilities that their European counterparts avoid. Furthermore, the majority of research on immigration in Norway is about larger populations of immigrants or refugees coming from resource- deprived countries. (Bratsberg, Raaum, & Røed, 2016; Galloway, 2006; Godøy, 2017) Therefore, there is a lack of research on this category of immigration in Norway.

This research project adds to a large body of research addressing issues surrounding migration and integration into Norway society, while exploring the unique challenges for a group which is not often examined. It gives voice to a group of immigrants from the United States to Norway and shines a light on their experiences integrating into the workforce. Furthermore, this research does not remain in the classic domains of research on labor integration but goes beyond in addressing the effect of immigrating on factors such as overall adjustment, life satisfaction, and identity. By looking at this group of informants' perspectives in a qualitative manner, a greater depth of individual experience can be presented. This information can be valuable in evaluating policy measures which impact voluntary migrants.

1.5 Research Questions

The goal of the research is to provide a basic understanding of how the process of immigration unfolds, how it impacts the informant's ability to find a job, and to become a productive member of society who is satisfied with his or her life. The research questions for this master's thesis include:

1. How do a group of immigrants from the United States to Norway experience the immigration and integration process?
2. How do these informants explain the connection between their immigrant status and their work inclusion, including employment prospects and satisfaction? How do these factors affect their confidence, sense of belonging, and the evolution of their values and identity?

2 Theoretical Framework

This section of the paper discusses the theoretical frameworks used as a backdrop in the development of this study and the analysis which followed. Two studies, Ager and Strang's (2008) Conceptual Model of Integration, and Spencer and Charsley's (2016) paper on the effectors of integration, create a framework through which the process of integration can be understood and conceptualized. These frameworks will be used to give context to the narratives expressed by the informants in the discussion section of this paper. My research questions aim to increase understanding of the factors of integration and their impact on the individual informants, particularly in the domain of employment. These frameworks discuss the factors/effectors which influence the rate and extent to which an individual who migrates will become integrated in their new society.

Ager and Strang (2008) developed a framework consisting of ten core domains through which the concept of integration can be understood and evaluated. This framework was primarily created through a combination of documentary and conceptual analysis (combining a wide range of definitions) and fieldwork (working with two groups of refugees). Although this framework was created by studying the integration process of groups of refugees, it is also relevant when discussing integration voluntary migrants.

Spencer and Charsley (2016) point out that societies are not homogenous in themselves, containing individuals of various social classes, religions, ages, etc. Thus, one cannot assume that a foreign individual would assimilate entirely in all domains, or in the same way as any other individual. Similarly, the factors or effectors of integration do not affect all migrants in the same way; the factors may assist in a migrant's success, or can stand as a barrier in their integration process. (Spencer & Charsley, 2016)

2.1 Ager and Strang's (2008) Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework

Ager and Strang (2008) determined that although there was a widespread use of the term "integration", it lacked a clear model for its conceptualization, therefore, they worked to create such a model which could be used to define and measure the concept.

Ager and Strang's framework for integration is divided into four categories: markers and means, social connection, facilitators, and foundation. Markers and means refer to factors that can, on the one hand, be used to evaluate integration but also are a means through which integration can occur. They include employment, housing, education, and health. This research paper focuses primarily on aspects of employment, and to some extent education (specifically, the acceptance of qualifications and access to educational programs for the informants as tools for success in the labor market).

The framework also lays focus on one of the primary drivers of integration, social connection. Social connection is broken down into three further categories: social bonds (relationships that immigrants have, particularly with those who share their cultural background), social bridges (connections they have with their new community), and social links which connect individuals to state or government services. (Ager & Strang, 2008) An example of a social connection as a driver of integration would be American or other immigrant friends who can give advice on navigating bureaucratic hurdles they might face. A further example might be a partner or friend who is Norwegian and can assist the immigrant practice the language.

Facilitators of integration identified in this framework include language and cultural knowledge, as well as security and safety. The facilitators either enable or disable an immigrant's ability to become integrated into their new country. (Ager & Strang, 2008) For example, an immigrant who is able to speak Norwegian might gain access to certain jobs in which language skills are imperative. In contrast, if an immigrant lacks security in their employment, they might struggle to have funds for suitable housing. Thus, security, language, social contacts, etc. are highly interrelated facilitators.

The foundation of the entire model is "Citizenship and Rights." Ager and Strang emphasize that citizenship comes with both rights and responsibilities. Often national identity impacts the way in which integration is approached. Some cultures embrace ideas such as multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism, while others are more focused on an "assimilation" form of integration in which immigrants are expected to adapt and become a seamless part of their new culture. Such differences impact the policies and rights awarded to foreigners. (Ager & Strang, 2008) When it comes to Norway specifically, there is an expectation for cultural conformity which has been institutionalized. (Avant & Knutsen, 1993; Hagelund, 2010) One example can be found in linguistic semantics; there is no terminological

distinction between the words “equality” and “similarity” in Norwegian, both are translated to “*likhet*.” (T. H. Eriksen, 2013) Therefore if the policy goal is “*likhet*,” there is an underlying assumption of an assimilation- type of integration. Thus, the immigration policies and broader societal views in Norway are in themselves an obstacle for immigrants to overcome. Moreover, for immigrants who have not acquired citizenship, there are often rights that are withheld which further stand in the way of their integration. (Ager & Strang, 2008)

2.2 Spencer and Charsley’s Effectors for Integration (2016)

Building in part on the framework built by Ager and Strang (2008), Spencer and Charsley (2016) developed a framework that aims to explain processes that occur during integration that either facilitate or impede the integration process. Spencer and Charsley identified additional factors which can stand as barriers to immigration including discrimination, the lack of recognition of qualifications, and restrictions on participation in their host society based on their legal status. (Spencer & Charsley, 2016) They refer to such factors “effectors.”

Spencer and Charsley (2016) identified five domains where effectors play a role in the integration process including: individuals (human capital), families and social networks (social capital), opportunity structures in the society (e.g. employment and housing opportunities), policy interventions (government programs, etc.), and transnational effectors (ability and/or ease for a foreigner/immigrant to remain connected to their “sending country”).

An illustration of how effectors function, can be seen in the domain of the individual. The primary effector impacting an individual’s work inclusion is their human capital (the education, skills, language capacity, knowledge, etc.) that they bring with them. (Spencer & Charsley, 2016) For example, an immigrant might have research skills which they have acquired prior to their move which could be put to use in finding useful information about programs, work positions, etc. This skill set plays into the individual’s ability to gain accreditation, qualifications, or find employment.

Along with developing a larger framework for integration, Spencer and Charsley (2016) emphasize that integration is a multifaceted process which takes place at varying rates in a range of spheres, including structural, cultural, social, civic and political participation, and identity. These categories can, at times, be indistinguishable from one another but are useful

in understanding the vast variety of processes that occur. Shifts in some domains will occur earlier and with more ease than others, for any given individual. Additionally, the experience in one sphere can impact the other in a positive or a negative way. The authors cite an example of an individual who has found employment, but due to evening and weekend working hours, has become more distant from his social contacts. Furthermore, “progress” in such domains is not necessarily one directional, at times individuals will become less integrated (due to unemployment, discrimination, etc.) (Spencer & Charsley, 2016)

Through their analysis of case studies, Spencer and Charsley identified that the integration in one domain can affect the progress or participation in other domains, which in turn impacts familial relationships and life course events such as marriage and having children. They came to the conclusion that integration and immigration policies have gendered impacts. Migration affects men and women differently, with varying expectations, opportunities, constraints, and vulnerabilities. ((Spencer & Charsley, 2016)

3 Methods

3.1 Study design

In order to gain insight into the research questions, I performed interviews which delved into the experiences of a group of individuals who moved from the United States to Norway. Additionally, I instructed the participants to create a timeline which was used as a data elicitation device throughout the interview. This timeline gave an overview of events that occurred after their move to Norway and highlight aspects of their immigration process. I gave each respondent the task of creating a basic timeline sketch before the interview; by doing so, the respondent was primed to think about his or her experiences and be better prepared for the interview questions.

By gathering data through these two approaches, I was able to acquire more in-depth and rich data that gives a better picture of the respondent’s experience. The goal of both the interview and the timeline was to get a glimpse into the participant’s process of immigration, particularly focused on their experience of finding work and working as an immigrant in Norway.

I instructed the informants to include the following items in the timeline: when the respondent arrived in Norway, and significant life events which have occurred since their move (romantic relationships/marriage, children, moves, etc.). The participant was also asked to note when they initially found employment, and subsequently, the jobs that they might have had. In some cases, the informant added information to the timeline over the course of the interview as it seemed relevant to them. I used the timeline throughout the interview to better understand which questions to ask.

The first questions in the interview covered the basic background and demographic information about the informants as (age, studies, relationship status, work, etc.) I also asked questions about what their life looked like before they moved to Norway. I then delved into topics such as why the individual immigrated to Norway, their process of finding work, including whether or not their previous experience and schooling was accepted, and any other bureaucratic hurdles they might have faced. After having built some rapport, I lead the interview towards topics such as the informant's social adjustment, goals and sense of well-being before and in the aftermath of their move. We discussed additional aspects which played into their integration including language, social connections, education, jobs that they have had, and experiences working in Norway. The interview concluded with questions about identity and status in connection to their move to Norway.

3.2 Selection Criteria

The research population included individuals from the United States, who had migrated to Norway without prospects of permanent employment. The primary reason for this requirement was that informants who came to Norway on a job contract would not have faced the challenges as those without employment sponsorship. In addition, I was seeking to focus on the first years in which the informants resided in Norway. With this focus, the informants were required to be adults and have moved to Norway more than one year ago, but within the past ten years. Those who had been in Norway less than one year would not be able to provide adequate information about their integration process as they had just arrived and had not yet fully experienced it. Those who have been in Norway less than ten years would have these experiences fresh in their minds and would be more readily able to recall details of their initial integration.

3.3 Recruiting

The majority of the informants who were recruited to this study were contacted through a Facebook group called “Americans in Norway.” I made a post on the forum outlining the research questions and the parameters for the informants. Those who were interested were directed to send me an email. I responded by sending them an invitation email which explained the topic and methods of the research project, informed them about confidentiality, as well as provided contact information so the informant could clarify any questions or doubts that might arise before taking part in the study. I was initially contacted by 13 individuals, however, all but six did not respond to my invitation email or fell away in the discussion of a time and a place for a meeting. Six of the nine informants were found through this process.

The remaining three informants in this study were recruited through other means. Before I made the post in the “Americans in Norway” Facebook group, I had asked some of my social contacts if any of them knew any American immigrants who fit the before mentioned parameters. I acquired two of my informants through personal social contacts. In both these cases, a mutual friend asked the US- American immigrant if they might be interested in speaking to me. When they agreed, I sent the invitation email including the informed consent forms and they then agreed to be interviewed. The last informant I had met previously, although we had only briefly spoken and I did not know her well. I contacted her initially to see if she would be willing to do a practice interview, to which she agreed. However, in discussion with my advisor, she determined that I could use her as an actual informant as we had limited contact before the interview.

All of the informants elected to take part in the interview. Thus, the group of informants which took part in this study is considered to be a convenience sample, because they actively chose to participate. (Bryman, 2012)

3.4 Semi- Structured Interviews

I selected a qualitative semi- structured interview to be my primary method in collecting data for this research project. Semi- structured interviews focus on the informant’s point of view, allowing informants to speak freely and “go off on tangents,” which create rich and detailed data. (Bryman, 2012) The research questions for this project focus on gaining an increased

understanding of the complexities of the immigration experience. Semi- structured interviews were the best way of acquiring this depth of information, by giving me the opportunity to connect with informants and allow their narratives to naturally unfold while maintaining enough structure to keep the discussion on the topic.

Bryman (2012) explains that one benefit of using a semi- structured interview format is the flexibility it allows the researcher to respond to the informants. I found this to be accurate when it came to performing interviews. For example, I was able to ask to follow up questions when a point was unclear or inconsistent. I was also able to change the order of questions to match the topics the informants were discussing. Ager and Strang (2008) determined that the factors for integration are highly interrelated; and I found that informants would often link one factor to another, speaking about them in an order that did not match the interview guide. This form of interview allowed me to account for this by bringing up topics as they fit the interview. Furthermore, this flexibility allowed me to adapt to different personality types. For example, some informants would only go into detail when I asked follow up questions.

3.5 Collection of Data, Transcription, and Coding

The interviews took place over the course of three months in the fall of 2018, the first interview took place in August and the last in November. One, short 15 minute follow up interview took place in December 2018. The interviews took place in a variety of settings, based primarily on where the informants expressed feeling most comfortable. Two took place in the homes of the informants, two at my university, one at the informant's place of employment in a conference room, and the rest took place at various cafés.

Initially, the informants filled out a timeline of major life events to prime them to think about the major events that had occurred before their move. I then used an interview guide to perform a semi- structured interview, using the timeline as a reference and a mode through which to initiate conversation. Throughout the data collection process, I recognized the importance of using the interview guide and follow up questions as a facilitator to the informant's assembly of their narratives. (Silverman, 2013) The interview deviated as necessary for the informant to share their story, but I maintained a general outline of questions and attempted to address all the intended topics. (Bryman, 2012)

After the individual interviews had been completed, I transcribed the interviews in their entirety. I used a program called NVivo to aid in the transcribing, a program which allows both the digital recording and the writing of transcriptions in the same window. I listened to each interview several times to ensure that the transcriptions precisely match the wording of the informants. I did not edit for grammatical errors; thus the data is in a conversational format. Although the NVivo program can be used for analysis, I did not use these functions. Instead, throughout the process of transcribing, I made note of emerging themes and where in the interview they were discussed. After the transcriptions were complete, I went through the interviews multiple times to collect quotes and organize emerging themes. I used OneNote to further organize my data, using digital folders to code quotes pertaining to the themes.

3.6 Analysis

The data collected through the interviews was evaluated using narrative analysis. The primary idea behind narrative analysis is that individuals make sense of what they have encountered by creating narrative stories to represent their experiences. (Bryman, 2012) Narrative analysis thus investigates the story itself. (Riessman, 1993)

According to Gubrium and Holstein (2009), the meaning-making process comes to light when an individual shares their story. This process was particularly interesting to me throughout the process of analysis. In a practical sense, I began to place less focus on what literally happened and rather focused on how my informants have made sense of their experiences. My analysis included taking into account what the informants intended effect of sharing their experience was; what were they trying to tell me by recounting that particular story? According to Riessman (1993, p. 2) "*Respondents narrativize particular experiences in their lives, often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society.*" A significant number of narratives shared by informants emphasized a discomfort with reality as they experience it, and how it deviated from how they wished to see themselves or be seen by others. I make note of such divergences throughout the paper.

A further tool for analyzing narratives is focusing on connections (linkages) that the informants make between meaningful things in their lives (for example identities, relationships, statuses, activities). (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009) I focused primarily on

linkages that informants made between facilitators and restrictors of their integration and outcomes such as their confidence, identity, and integration in the Norwegian workforce. These linkages, as well as reoccurring and common narratives, became the primary thematic categories used in the results section of this paper.

3.7 Ethics

Ethical issues were central to the planning, format, and execution of this study. The primary ethical issues in question were that of anonymity and privacy for the participants, sensitivity toward talking to informants about personal issues, as well as addressing bias. I have carefully evaluated all of these factors in the development of the methodology as well as throughout the execution of the research and writing process to optimize the ethical integrity of this project.

When it comes to privacy, I took the informants' willingness to participate in the interview seriously and did all in my power to make sure that the participants' identities remained anonymous. In a practical sense, this meant that I took significant measures to make the informants personal information unidentifiable. I anonymized the data by changing the names of all people and most places, making personal or identifiable information untraceable. Furthermore, I generalized information about geographical regions, professional industries, etc. Examples of such anonymization include changing or leaving out the names of employers, places of birth/ where the informant lives, specific dates, etc. in the transcripts and the final master's thesis document. An additional measure included disposing of digital voice data upon the completion of this project. Furthermore, I acquired ethical clearance from NSD (Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata).³ This is essential because I used audio recording equipment and was in possession of sensitive personal data. (Silverman, 2013) I fulfilled all requirements surrounding the storing and deletion of data and took measures to protect the personal information that could be identifiable if combined.

I also took measures to be sensitive in my communication with the informants, as topics covered in the interview are personal. A letter of consent was signed before the interview took place, in which I informed participants about their right to decline to answer any specific question, as well as ability to end the interview prematurely for any reason before the

³ NSD is the data protection organization for research performed in Norway

interview began. None of the participants elected to end the interview, however, there were a few instances in which an informant declined to expand on a question or answer in entirety. When performing the interview, I strove to be sensitive to the topics that the informants choose to share and avoid. According to (Bryman, 2012), It is important that an interviewer observes the respondents' emotional responses to the questions in an interview setting. When I noticed that informants were uncomfortable speaking about a particular topic, I avoided delving into topics more than they were comfortable with.

Another relevant ethical issue is that of researcher bias. I, myself, am an immigrant who has experienced moving to and attempting to integrate into a foreign country twice. The fact that I do have a similar background to the informants (being half- American) was valuable in making a connection with the informants. However, it was important to avoid sharing personal information as it may have led to biased responses. For example, an informant might assume that I, as a researcher, simply understand an aspect of their experience and thus decrease the depth of information they explicitly provided. (Bryman, 2012) Throughout the interview, I noticed that it was difficult to avoid talking about my story, particularly when several informants inquired. I did allow the informants to ask such questions after the interview was completed

I focused on practicing reflexivity when analyzing the data, attempting not to mix my own experiences with the information that the informants explicitly stated. However, that is easier said than done and bias inevitably seeps through in the themes and narratives that I detected and wrote about. Furthermore, an interview is by its very nature an interactive experience. I, as a researcher (with my identity, values, reactions, etc.) was communicating with the informant to gather data. (Risjord, 2014) Although these issues have been thoroughly addressed, some bias inevitably remains. The most important measure that I have taken, is that only I only analyzed concrete data, using the quotes from the informants to portray the narratives that they chose to share. I avoided going beyond the bounds of that which they explicitly stated.

3.8 Limitations

This master's thesis is limited in several respects. Particularly when it comes to length and depth, it would be impossible to cover the topic of integration of US- Americans in Norway in

full depth, as integration is an extremely complicated and involved process which manifests in many domains of life. (Spencer & Charsley, 2016) Thus, this paper primarily focus on the topic of integration within the realm of work inclusion and its' effects on the individual.

A further limitation is that of access. As stated previously, the informants for this project were a convenience sample. (Bryman, 2012) The majority of them contacted me because of their own interest in being interviewed to document their narratives (three out of nine were contacted directly by myself or others and asked if they were interested in taking part in the study). The informants were also a highly educated group who actively chose to take part in the research. Because of these factors, the narratives from these informants are likely not a representative voice for the experiences of other US- Americans living in Norway.

Furthermore, I have attempted to cover topics which are somewhat sensitive in nature, particularly questions regarding psychological well- being, discrimination, and identity. It is possible that I was not able to achieve the needed rapport to get a true picture of personal experiences, or I might not have asked the right questions.

While quantitative research aims to gather information, which can be generalized across a specific population, qualitative research focuses rather on a deeper and complex understanding of values, behavior, or experiences for the research population. (Bryman, 2012) One significant limitation of this paper is that of scope; having only interviewed nine individuals, it is impossible to make any wide-reaching conclusions or generalizations. In order to make such generalizations a quantitative study would be necessary; however, this research can aid in understanding how a group of individuals see their experience and create meaning in their lives. (Silverman, 2013)

4 The Informants

4.1 Basic Demographic Info about the Informants

There were nine informants for this project, six females and three males. The average age of the informants was 38 years. Informants came from all major regions of the continental United States. Six of the informants are married, one is in a cohabitating relationship, one is

in a non-cohabitating relationship (and engaged), and one is single. Four of the informants have no children, four have their own children, and one has only stepchildren.

All informants came to or stayed in Norway for love (either with a Norwegian or another American who has a job in Norway). The informants have been in Norway between two and eight years, for an average of 6.04 years.

The informants are a highly educated group, six out of nine have graduate degrees and all have attended college (one has a PhD, five have master's degrees, two have bachelor's degrees, and one almost completed college, along with other professional coursework). The informants come from a variety of industries (food service industry, social sciences (politics/education/history), social work, IT/ technical, and medical).

Seven of the informants identify as white/Caucasian; three of those cite additional heritage: Native American, Jewish, and Italian background. One informant has a mixed European and Central Asian background, and informant has Hispanic ethnicity.

The informants have a wide variety of religious views and backgrounds. The informants all were raised in religious households (one Jew, one Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), one Jew, three Protestant Christian, two Catholic, one in an unspecified "cult", and one with a mixed religious family (Islamic and Christian). Today they identify as follows: one Atheist, two Agnostic, one Jewish, one affiliated with the Latter-day Saint Church, two as spiritual or following other philosophies, one Catholic, and one Protestant.

The informants come from a variety of political backgrounds: two stated they came from a more conservative political background, two discussed growing up in liberal families, one grew up centrist, and one with mixed political values within the family. However, now almost all informants (seven out of nine) discussed becoming more liberal in their political leanings throughout living or since moving to Norway. The other two informants avoid politics, but are generally fairly centrist; however, one of these two did talk about becoming more liberal in his views since moving to Norway.

The informants are at a variety of Norwegian language levels. Four of the nine informants are at C level (advanced), two are at B2, one is at B1 (intermediate levels), and two are at A2 level (higher beginner).

4.2 Introduction to the Informants

This section introduces the informants, including relevant information to assist in following their stories throughout the research paper.

Victoria (35)

Victoria is a new mother of a baby boy. She is married to a Norwegian and came to Norway after her Norwegian husband had found work in Oslo. She has worked in the food service industry for many years as a chef, and before the move had owned a catering business as well as worked as a personal chef to a prominent figure in the United States. Upon arriving in Norway, Victoria spent a period of time unemployed, then a short time looking for work. She ended up finding work in the kitchen of a fine restaurant in Oslo through social contacts. Victoria is the only informant I interviewed twice; she was the first informant and I later asked for a second interview to discuss a few questions which I added to later interviews. Victoria had been in Norway for just under two years when the first interview took place and just over two years when the second took place. She was on maternity leave at the time of both interviews.

Eliana (28)

Eliana initially came to Norway to work as an English teacher on a one-year teaching contract as part of a cultural enrichment program. While in Norway, she met her Norwegian husband. After her initial stay in Norway, she moved back to the United States for a time, before returning to get married to her husband. Her bachelor is in politics and she has a master's degree relating to education, which she obtained in Norway. After completing her master's degree, she managed to find a full-time contracted position related to her education. However, she has not managed to find the kind of fulfilling work that she would most like to do. At the time of the interview, she had been in Norway for a total of four years.

Isabel (36)

Isabel has a PhD in history. Before moving to Norway, Isabel lived and studied in the United Kingdom. While there, she met her Norwegian partner. Isabel moved to Norway with her boyfriend directly after she had completed her PhD, both of them moving with the intention of finding work. Her boyfriend found work that summer while Isabel spent some time working part-time as a substitute in a daycare/kindergarten program (barnehage), however, she struggled for a couple of years to find a fulfilling work position. Eventually, she landed a freelance writing contract for a company relating to education. Through these connections, she was eventually able to find a full-time work contract through the company directly. She has since moved into a management position with that same company. At the time of the interview, she had been in Norway about four and a half years.

Charlotte (34)

Charlotte initially came to Norway as a master's student in a social science field. While in Norway, she met her spouse. Throughout her studies, she worked as a server in a restaurant. After completing her education, she struggled to find fulfilling work in her field with a permanent contract, although she has found some short-term projects that she enjoyed. A few years ago, Charlotte returned to the United States for a period of about a year to help out with a family member who had gotten sick. Since then, she continues to look for a job relating to her education and experience. She spends significant time volunteering and currently works as a contractor, working as a server and bartender at events. Charlotte had been in Norway for a period of seven years in total at the time of the interview.

David (43)

David moved to Norway after several years in a long-distance relationship with his Norwegian wife. He met his wife online, through a dating app. They maintained a long-distance relationship for a couple of years before they got married. She moved to the United States for a few months but ultimately decided to return to Norway for personal reasons. He followed a few years later. David has a background in IT management and spent nearly four years looking for work in Norway before finding a job in his field. David discusses his experiences moving to Norway including his struggles finding work as an English speaker in a smaller city in Norway. At the time of the interview, David had been in Norway for four years.

Adriana (35)

Adriana met her Norwegian husband while doing community work in Africa. After her experience working abroad, Adriana returned to the United States, where they maintained a long-distance relationship for a couple of years before Adriana came to Norway as an au pair. Adriana describes experiences working as an au pair in Norway. She also discusses her experiences seeking work and obtaining a master's degree in Norway. Adriana recently obtained a job related to her education, in social work. Adriana moved to Norway about seven and a half years before the interview.

Peter (50)

Peter married a Norwegian woman and was living with her in the United States with their two children when the recession of 2008 led to the loss of his job. Peter has experience in a niche field of IT, for which there are no training programs in Norway. Thus, they decided to move to her home country, knowing that he would have a better chance of finding work in Norway. Within a couple of weeks of moving to Norway, he had found a job. Since then, he has worked for a few companies and now works in a management role. He and his wife divorced some years ago; he is currently engaged to be married. Peter additionally discusses experiences growing up in a cult and the impact that has on his life outlook and integration in Norway. He came to Norway about eight years before the interview took place.

Bridget (43)

Bridget has a background in nursing and midwifery in the United States, having worked for four years as a nurse before obtaining her masters in midwifery. She had 11 years of work experience in her field before she moved to Norway. Bridget's husband is also from the United States and had spent some time living in Norway previously. They were both interested in living in Norway for a time, and after he completed his PhD, he found a job in Norway. Bridget discusses the challenge of trying to obtain her authorization to work as a nurse in Norway, a process that took nearly five years. She also discusses her experience raising her two children in Norway. Bridget had been in Norway for about eight years at the time of the interview.

Adam (36)

Adam has a background in international relations, having worked for international help organizations in various countries around the world. He met his Norwegian ex-girlfriend while doing his masters abroad. After a period of time working for an international

organization in another country, they decided to move to Norway together. Because of visa restrictions, Adam was unable to work in Norway for the first year (although he did take on some projects under the table during that time). Since then, he has struggled to find work relating to his education and experience, although he has found some short-term contracts and projects working in his field. After working in a logistics position for three years, he experienced a burnout and left that job. At the time of the interview, he was looking for work relating to his field. He and his ex-girlfriend have a child together, and thus he intends to remain in Norway for the foreseeable future. At the time of the interview, he had been in Norway for seven years.

5 Results

The results section of this paper addresses the ways in which a group of immigrants from the United States to Norway experience the immigration and integration process. It is divided into four thematic categories, comprised of the linkages and reoccurring narratives expressed by the informants in their interviews. The first section portrays the access that informants have to work which corresponds with their educational and work experiences and the ability for informants to obtain quality employment positions which align with their values. The second section addresses belonging, including the ways in which informants express navigating challenges with language and socializing and its effect on their confidence. The next section portrays the ways in which informants express being in a state of limbo, falling between definitions, employment opportunities, and discrimination. The final section addresses the evolution of status and identity, including factors such as rights and vulnerabilities of this population, and the informants shift in status, identity, and priorities.

5.1 Work Situations: the quality of work and status as a worker

This section gives voice to the narratives from the informants on the topic of employment, the core topic of this project. First, I have collated stories about the informants discussing their time working in precarious positions. I continue on to address the experiences informants have had getting their previous work experience and education accepted as a qualification and the ways in which informants explained having shame about the employment that they had fallen into. The rest of this section describes the work environments and the treatment that informants reported, as well as their navigation of Norwegian work culture as Americans.

5.1.1 Precarious Work

Foreign employees often find themselves in a position of precarious work, working in fields that they are overqualified for, or in positions that are not permanent and lack the stability that a full-time contract secures. The majority of the informants are highly educated, and often have had significant professional work experience before moving to Norway. Several of them discuss how they ended up in positions that they were extremely overqualified for. Often these jobs are on short term contracts and thus, unstable.

The struggle to find a permanent position was a common theme in the interviews. Adam touches on the subject: *"It is not in my experience, that difficult to get a part- time, or as they call it a ringevikår (on- call substitute position) which is like they call you whenever you need you sort of position. Which means that you don't have a contract with all the benefits, and you are not as well protected."* Getting a permanent position depends greatly on the position and the industry. Adam has been employed in jobs in which receiving a permanent contract was not self-evident: *"it is really hard to get a permanent position, and that in my experience is all about network... I have seen people just because of the people they knew got permanent positions in companies."* He later tells an experience about how a previous employer would give jobs to friends from their "hometowns" ... *"they were overlooking hard workers who had been there for a while and giving these new 17-year-old kids, permanent positions. While, I don't know, 30-year-old guys who were foreigners who were busting their butts off."*

Many of the jobs that such foreigners are able to procure, are short- term by nature. Eliana touches her experience with a position, that she later realized was only for the short Christmas season. *"[The employer] said: 'oh yeah there might be the possibility that we will keep some people on.' But I realized pretty quickly that they weren't going to keep anyone on, they had enough full-time staff, this was just the extra rush."*

Other informants talked about obtaining jobs which were inconsistent and unstable. When Isabel arrived in Norway as a job- seeker, she was able to find a position in barnehage (preschool/day care program) as a vikår (substitute, non- permanent position). *"I went to this one barnehage out in the countryside. And they started having me almost 3-4 days a week for quite a long stretch. It was never 'fast' (permanent) though, they would just tell me week by*

week. Like ok, next week we need you Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.” She worked in various barnehages for two years, and never received a permanent position.

Bridget had a long road to begin working in the nursing field (which will be discussed in the next section). However, even when she did receive a position within her career field in the “*new born intensive care unit as a nurse,*” she remains in a precarious position, not having a permanent work contract. “*I have been there in a vikåriat since, over a year and a half. So, it is... uncertain in terms of- now I have a vikåriat which goes until next June...I guess I could say that I don't know what will happen after next June, but I also know that they have a need.*” Even though she is confident that she will be able to remain in that position, uncertainty remains on some level.

Along with the challenge of obtaining a permanent position, is that of receiving the needed compensation. Even when Adam was able to find work that that was related to his education, the position lacked funding for a full-time contract. “*I was able to get a short- term contract at Hjerterom, which is ones of the biggest Norwegian humanitarian organizations.*”

However, he again found himself in a position of precarious work. He worked there for about 6 months “*because it was a short-term thing, they pretty much made it clear that their budget was really low and that they didn't have any permanent positions available...They said: 'you can stay here as long as you want, but it will be a low pay contract.' So financial reasons made me look forward... I moved on.*”

5.1.2 Acceptance of Qualifications

A further obstacle in the quest for finding work in Norway is that of the acceptance of qualifications, both education and previous work experience. Many of the informants have not had any major issues with this, having either studied in Norway or being in fields that did not require official credentialing. For example, when it came to finding work in his field, Adam stated that his previous work experience and his high level university education set him apart from other applicants: “*the reason that they gave me a short- term contract was because of my education... and the United Nation work that I did- they thought it could be very useful and for them it was.*” Furthermore, employers have not required him to have his education approved by “*NOKUT*” (the agency that evaluates foreign education in Norway) ... “*yeah no employer has ever asked me to... they have always just accepted it.*”

Adriana describes her experience with NOKUT as *“just really slow. So the process took like a year or something.”* She also mentioned that although her bachelor’s degree had been accepted *“they don’t count everything from the US... they only count like three years of it, or something like that. And then I had taken some extra coursework in the US but they didn’t count that for anything.”* However, once she had obtained her *“papers from NOKUT, people didn’t question anything.”* She continued on to say that: *“I think they thought it was interesting that I had worked in the US.”* For some informants such as Adam and Adriana, the experience of studying and working abroad seems like a benefit to their resume.

Although the education might generally be accepted as a qualification, Charlotte argues that in contrast to the United States, there seems to be an expectation that education line up entirely with the job description. In the United States *“it is very open... whereas here you get tied in very early”* to a career. The qualifications *“can be so specific, and you could have achieved more than something, and you can be overqualified, but if you are not overqualified in the right way, then everything falls away.”* She continues on the say that *“qualifications, are more of a guideline in the States, and here every single one has to be ticked. ”*

On a similar note Isabel describes that when she was looking into higher- level barnehage work, employers would say: *“we really like you,”* but then ask if she had studied pedagogy. She then contended that she *“started [her] degree as a child development music teacher”* and that she has *“all of those classes... music pedagogy and child development and all those sort of classes”* but that she does not have a full degree in *“child psychology or child development, or in elementary education.”* She reflects that in the US, she would have been eligible to apply for such positions on the bases of the classes she had taken. However, in Norway: *“They don’t see the courses as part of the degree, they see only the degree. So when I say, no I don’t have a degree in child psychology. They are like: ‘ok- sorry’.”* (3, 1:17:14)

Bridget’s Experience:

For an someone who works in a field that his highly regulated, such as medicine, credentialing of foreign education and work experience is required. Bridget, who had obtained a bachelor’s degree in nursing had worked as a nurse for four years before going on to get a master’s degree in midwifery in the US. In total she had 12 years of work experience

in her field. Before she moved to Norway, she had looked into it and met a couple nurses who had to go through similar credentialing processes. One had *“done her nursing education in the US, then moved to Norway, and then did her midwifery education”* in Norway. She also talks about a Norwegian acquaintance who had *“done her nursing education at the same school that I did... and moved to Norway... and got her authorization- with a little bit of effort.”* Bridget talked about how they had to *“do a little bit of praxis- like clinical, like hospital work, before they were approved.”* But she was convinced that all her years of experience would make a difference in the process *“but then, you know, came the first, denial.”*

Bridget goes on to describe the ups and downs of her credentialing process that took over four and a half years. She *“applied in October of 2010 and got approved in May of 2015.”* She began the process by applying with NOKUT, who approved *“both degrees with no problem at all.”* However, she also had to apply with SAK (the authorization board for healthcare workers). They responded saying that she was *“missing all this geriatric clinical and psychiatric clinical”* they continued on to say that her nursing degree was only a *“two- year degree and Norway has a four-year degree”*. Bridget explains that in the US, nursing students spend the first two years working on prerequisites and then *“nursing classes and clinical [classes] in the second two years.”* Because of the difference in university programs between the two countries: *“Norwegians look at a bachelors in the United States, and they throw out that first year because ‘that really doesn't count’.”*

Bridget was convinced that this must have been a misunderstanding, and began to gather paperwork, documentation and letters from her college of nursing and advisors, along with documentation proving that she had worked in geriatric care as a summer job in college. They responded by saying that they *“acknowledge [she has] a four -year degree”* and stated that now she would only *“only need to do six weeks”* of *“psychiatric and geriatric and home health”* each, instead of eight weeks each. Bridget still was not pleased with this result thinking: *“that is still just ridiculous, I shouldn't have to do that!”*

The back and forth proceeded over years. In part because she needed to increase her Norwegian skills and pass the *“Norskprøve 2”* (“Norwegian Exam 2” - higher intermediate level Norwegian exam) as well as take a month- long *“Nasjonalle Fagkurs* (National Vocational Course)...*Which basically goes through the health care laws in Norway”* before

she would be able to work in Norway. In addition, SAK's predecessor SAFH was going through a transition and she had heard stories about people who had done the clinical work only to be *"denied after they had done all the work saying that rules had changed."*

In the meantime, she had sent her case to the appeals board. She recounts: *"I think they said.... 'Not only do we agree with the authorization office, we actually think... that you need to do your whole education over again, like nothing is worth anything, and you need to go to a college of nursing and maybe they can give you credit for individual classes.'"* She did go on to have her classes evaluated by a college of nursing who, according to Bridget stated: *"there is nothing that you need, we can't offer you anything...degrees aren't exactly the same but the end, there is just a different way of going about these things...you get to the same point, you have a qualified nurse."* This response, however, did not change the fact that she needed approval from the authorization board.

She tried to get in contact with members of parliament, who although sympathetic, were unable to help. She even hired a lawyer, along with collecting responses from *"three or four different colleges of nursing"* who had evaluated her school transcripts and gathered other cases where nurses had been given approval. Eventually she conceded and began to do clinical work in geriatrics when *"approval came in."* They explained that she had *"fulfilled the requirements because [she] had done 8 weeks of geriatrics."* She interprets: *"therefore I had suddenly- I had done what they wanted me to do. That was enough for them, that was sort of their excuse as to why they had kind of changed their minds."*

This case underlines the complicated landscape professionals in such an industry can face when they move from the United States to Norway with the intention of working in their field, even when they have many years of work experience and expertise.

5.1.3 Shame and Underemployment

Working in a field outside of the career that the informants had previously built up or had been on track to achieve, was often difficult for the informants to navigate. In the time where Bridget was awaiting her authorization, she spent some time working as a nursing assistant in a nursing home. She describes her experience working so close and yet so far from a job that she once had, *"I was working essentially as a nursing assistant and I felt like I was so below*

my... my level of professionalism, my level of knowledge, and just not the population I wanted to work with.” While on maternity leave, she resolved that she would not return, *“to working in a health care field until [she] can work- unless this works out [the authorization].”* Bridget explains: *“that is why I worked at a gift shop and a cafe- just to do something completely different. But also, because I wasn't qualified to do other things.”*

This experience often manifested itself in the form of shame and embarrassment. For example, Eliana also experienced shame when she was unemployed, a scenario that she had never envisioned for herself. *“I was so embarrassed that like I was this lean forward person. I graduated on the top of my class... and then I was unemployed in Norway.”* She follows with her perception of what her peers were thinking: *“People were like “oh my God, what happened to Eliana?”* She admits that she was *“so embarrassed,”* saying: *“I didn't update my LinkedIn, and I saw all of my friends in the US who were doing things- whether it was PhD programs, or jobs, or former coworkers- and I just felt so... I felt so not like myself.”* She links this experience to the discrepancy between where she had ended up, and how she defines her identity. The discomfort that she felt led to her attempt to hide her circumstance from her network.

Prior to her move, Victoria had been a successful chef who was *“respected in the field.”* Victoria describes shame associated with talking about her current position with those she meets: *“it is kind of demoralizing in a way... like retelling ‘What do you do?’, ‘Where do you work?’.”* She experiences discomfort and deflects what she perceives as judgment: *“I am always embarrassed and make some joke about it and laugh about it, just to deflect from the fact that I am embarrassed.”* She continues: *“I always have to give... some background to why I am working there- even though no one is asking... they don't need to know that- but I feel the need to, to like validate myself.”* Throughout the interview Victoria grapples with her change in status and links her shame to not being as successful in Norway as she had been in the United States.

Similarly, Charlotte discusses discomfort towards assumptions acquaintances have made regarding her work as a server. *“Norwegians, they don't care if you are a server or these types of jobs, or unemployed- it's all the same to them.”* She goes on, *“there is a lot of like, assumptions that people make like “oh you must be on NAV (Arbeids- og Velferdsforvaltningen, social assistance) and stuff like that. I am not, and I never have been.”*

Much like Victoria, Charlotte finds ways to deflect from these perceived notions: *“I find myself like, overcompensating with my education and talking about certain things in order to make like people understand that I am not ‘this way’.”* She mentions her discomfort with this idea by saying that she is *“fundamentally against”* the idea that everyone needs to go to college and continues by saying: *“all jobs are important jobs.”* However, she struggles to think about herself in that way. This is something she faces now more than ever, as she finished her master’s degree a few years ago and can no longer lean on her education to the same extent: *“it is super uncomfortable to have to explain everything.”*

5.1.4 Work Environments

The informants have had a wide range of experiences when it comes to their work environment. Several of the informants, particularly when they have found professional career track work, described a positive work environment where they were treated well. Other informants discuss negative experiences. Peter talks about how he has had a mix of experiences when it comes to his work environment. When describing his current position, he states: *“I know this company doesn't treat people differently... a Norwegian has the same rights, benefits and standing as a non-Norwegian.”* He goes on to describe that for his first job *“that was not true. It- well, for the most part it was true, but in some cases it wasn't.”*

Adam similarly talks about how he has had differing experiences in two different positions. The first job he describes was a job in logistics for a clothing retail company: *“Ubinion was really not a good work environment at all. Because of the type of job it was, it think I would say that it was a bit more physical.”* Along with the strenuous nature of the job, he goes on to explain: *“obviously it is a lower level in terms of education so the rights and working conditions are not as great.”* He also mentions that the company was *“Swedish based”* and that the *“managers are all Swedish.”* He asserts, *“I don't know how it is in Sweden, but we definitely were managing a Swedish mentality and that was not Norwegian.”* He describes the work environment as being *“definitely a bit strict when it came down to having like, lunch breaks and not doing the work during work hours- it can be warnings and strict talks and stuff like that.”* He later postulates that the environment was *“completely the opposite from a Norwegian work environment in a Norwegian company.”*

He seemed to come to this conclusion on the basis of his experience working in a Norwegian professional environment. He spent some time working for Hjerterom, an aid organization, which he describes as *"a professional level in a prestigious... aid organization in Norway."* He makes the comparison of Hjerterom to his previous employment, *"The work environment is just, yeah, incredible."* He defines a good work environment as being one in which a person has *"all the time they need"* which has a *"trust-based system."* At this place of work the emphasis was on performance and *"getting the job done"*, regardless if you *"come in late"* or *"leave early."* He argues that a company *"will always find out how you are performing."* Several times throughout the interview he emphasizes what he calls a *"Norwegian work environment,"* which he holds in high esteem.

Eliana similarly emphasizes that on the whole, she feels she has been respected in her work environments in Norway. *"I would say that for all the jobs that I have held, people have always been respectful for me. And no one has ever given me a hard time for being American or Jewish or like any of those things..."* However, she also described an experience with a job that she held for only a few days while she was a student. She had found a job in the retail industry in which the contract stated that she would be working *"like 10 hours- 15 hours,"* however, she later realized they had scheduled her for *"thirty. And I was like: 'I am still a full-time student'- and they were like, 'well we said a minimum of 10-15 hours'. And I was like, 'that is not what my contract says.'"* She later reflected that she was glad she did not need to keep that job. She describes that overall, she has had a good experience working in Norway, *"I feel very lucky, because I actually think that it is uncommon for foreigners."*

The majority of the informants eventually have found career related work. However, many have spent a time working in more unskilled/ unstable positions. Both Eliana and Adam's stories point to a shift in work atmosphere based on the kind of position. There is a certain level of vulnerability that the informants faced when seeking employment in Norway. For example, David mentioned that after years of being underemployed in Norway, he allowed himself to be taken advantage of regarding his salary, *"Because I wanted the job, I lowballed my salary. I did it on purpose so I could get the job."* He regrets this now, knowing that he should be paid more for the work that he is doing.

Another vulnerability that the informants expressed is the absence of adherence to Norwegian worker laws. Charlotte, who has had significant experience working as a server and bartender

in Norway states, *"I would say that, the more foreigners that are present, the less stringent they are to obeying Norwegian work laws. And that is a huge indicator. And I didn't like working anywhere where there were a lot of foreigners present."*

Charlotte goes on to describe a particularly negative work environment when working in her first job as a server in a restaurant, *"If the oppgjør (cash out) at the end of the night, if that didn't match what they wanted, they took it from tips. Which is absolutely not ok, and illegal."* She continues by underlining various ways in which they did not follow worker laws. She mentions that it is not permitted to work more than *"nine consecutive days in Norway"* and yet she *"had 14 shifts in a row constantly."* She continues that one is only allowed to be scheduled to work two weekends in a month and yet she *"did that all the time."* They also did not observe *"certain red days (official work holidays) ... that were mandatory to be paid 150%- time and a half."* She added that often she did not hear back on vacation requests and that when it came to vacation pay outs, they *"withheld the money for months after they should have been allowed to."* She continued, *"They still owe me money."*

Adriana's Experience:

Another industry which an informant was able to shed light on, is that of being an au pair. Adriana met her now husband, who is Norwegian, while doing humanitarian work abroad. She maintained a long-distance relationship with him for a couple years, but felt that she needed to *"be in Norway and get to know [her] husband better"*. For an American and Norwegian the issues of visas stood in the way. Eventually she determined she could come to Norway as an au pair. She describes how she was placed with a family on *"the West side of Oslo, so they were super rich. They lived in this amazing house, I got like the top room in the house and I had a view of the whole Oslo Fjord from the window. I mean it was amazing..."* However, she goes on to explain that despite the idyllic setting, *"It was just a horrible place to live."* Adriana points out that the family would claim to be *"just an average Norwegian family"* but that she found them to be extremely *"direct"*. She recounts one experience in which the *"wife"* said, *"watch out for this [sculpture], don't let the kids break it because it cost more than your salary for a month or two months."* She recalls feeling *"so strange"* and thinking, *"Isn't that rude to say something like that?"*

In addition to the poor work environment, there were additional aspects which made the situation difficult. Adriana continues: *“I had a very low salary. It was like 3000kr a month, and I couldn't do anything with that.”* She describes that prior to moving to Norway, she had to take up a loan in the United States and that *“trying to pay that off on 3000kr a month which is nearly impossible.”* She explains that she would often call her then boyfriend and ask if she could *“come eat dinner at [his] place,”* because, despite the fact that the family was required to provide food for her, they continually neglected to take her food allergies into account. She recalls them saying: *“oh we don't have that food that you need, so just eat bread.”* She remembers thinking: *“is that normal to say? Or is it me?”*

She depicts a work environment in which the family who was employing her *“maybe didn't read all the rules.”* For example, they were technically required to provide her with a monthly transportation card but *“they didn't do that.”* Additionally, she talks about how she was only *“supposed to work five hours a day and... six days a week,”* but she was working more than that. She then decided *“to say something... so then they stopped with that.”* At times they offered extra money if she would *“clean or do extra things,”* she stated that she *“did it a few times. Not because [she] wanted to, but because [she] felt like [she] didn't have a choice.”* She recognizes that although she received additional compensation, she *“didn't like the idea of doing that, because that wasn't supposed to be [her] job.”*

Perhaps the most difficult dynamic as an au pair is that of proximity and dependence. Adriana explains, *“You live with those people, right? And then what happens if I say something? I would get kicked out, or. Yeah, I don't know. So it was a really awkward situation. So I really hated being there.”* Adriana later described the difficult position she was in, because she wanted to be near her boyfriend. She could have *“just quit and gone back to the US and gotten a job again there,”* but she did not want to leave. This put her in a position where she *“put up with”* more than she might have otherwise. She also stated: *“If I knew how it was going to be, I probably would have, should have, found a different way to come to Norway.”*

Adriana states that she knows of other au pairs who have had positive experiences: *“I have met other people who feel like had an absolutely amazing time and didn't have to work a lot.”* However, being an au pair does put a person in a vulnerable position where their place of work, housing, and residency status is dependent on their professional relationship. Adriana

recognized this vulnerability and said that, *“A Norwegian girl would not put up with that kind of stuff, just based on the way that I was treated and the low pay... there would be no Norwegian who would work for that kind of pay.”*

5.1.5 Working in Management

A few of the informants had experience working in a management role and discussed dynamics around being in a leadership position. Peter talks about how he knows about Norwegian worker rights, particularly since he has gained managerial responsibilities. Understanding Norwegian worker rights *“comes with being a hiring manager.”* Victoria has had a similar experience: *“because I manage a staff that does know their rights, and defiantly-takes full advantage of their rights, its uh, taught me a lot.”* She recognizes that *“there is a lot of support for workers in Norway”* stating that *“it’s nothing like the US.”* In particular when it comes to *“the process of having a child,”* she says: *“I laugh a lot about how unbelievably cushy it is to work here.”*

However, many of these worker protections do not pertain to those in management positions. Peter states: *“I have far less rights than the average person, because of my contract.”* He explains: *“for example, um 37 1/2 hour mandated work week- doesn't really apply to me. I don't get paid overtime. There is a lot of worker protection that I don't have because of my rank.”* He recognizes that he is *“compensated for it”* and says: *“I am not complaining, but it is a little bit less protection.”*

5.1.6 Accountability

Although there are extensive worker protections in Norway, some of the informants point to an absence of accountability. Eliana and Isabel both talked about how they work in companies that does not have a human resources department, and that because of that, they do not know how they would go about addressing personal issues. Eliana mentions that *“The only thing I would say is kind of shady about my current position is that... we don't really have an HR office.”* She states that if she was, for example, being sexually harassed, she doesn’t *“know who the contact person at the company is. Like you are supposed to have a*

certain representative... I realized I have no idea who that is. So lucky- I haven't been sexually harassed."

Similarly, Isabel also does not know who she would contact if she needed to discuss personal matters. She explains that she has questions surrounding the maternity leave policy at her work and she doesn't *"really know who to ask."* She is apprehensive that if she does *"start asking"* she does not know *"if it will be dealt with in a professional way."* She continues, *"I am not pregnant, we are not even trying. But I have no idea what the maternity policy is at my company. I know that it has to fall under Norwegian law."* Isabel expresses: *"I don't know what I would do, who I would tell, how I would start the ball rolling on that if it became an issue."* Although there is a general understanding of Norwegian worker laws, informants describe a lack of concrete accountability and do not know where to turn when and if issues arise. Not having a HR contact, could be problematic for Norwegian and foreign employees alike, however, foreign employees are particularly vulnerable especially if they do not know their rights.

5.1.7 Culture at the Workplace

A handful of the informants talked about a difference in work culture between the United States and Norway. This is something that Eliana is particularly passionate about. Throughout her interview, Eliana often points out that she is highly motivated and ideally would want a position that pushes her to be effective and work hard. She explains, *"I am someone who like... if you give me a project, I can sit down and I can do it, and I can do a really good job. And I can get through another project and another and another. And I can work relatively efficiently."* She links her identity to her career success and impact, and continually points out that her ideal job is one in which she is challenged. She reflects, *"I think part of the reason that I am not so happy with my job is that there is not enough for me to do."* She has noticed a difference between the way in which she and her colleagues works, stating *"they don't quite work as efficiently."* At times she finds herself avoiding going into work because she knows she has *"nothing to do. And you still have to sit at your desk and do the performance of doing work."* On such days she describes trying to *"particularly align [her] working from home days when [she knows she doesn't] have a lot to do."*

This mismatch of work outlook can be hard for Norwegian friends and family to understand. Isabel talks about how her Norwegian boyfriend and friends have a completely different outlook on their work. Isabel explains, *“Of course I can go home if I wanted to, but I am going to get my work done, so I am going to stay... When... [they] hear that I worked until 7 or 8 at night, several days in a row- and even though I have put that on flexi and I am going to use that for a long weekend or something at some point- they are like ‘they can’t do that’.”* She responds by saying, *‘They are not making me stay- I am choosing to stay and work’.* For Isabel it is important to get the job done, and she is not worried about putting in some extra hours if that is what it takes.

On the other hand, Peter has gained another perspective on the difference between American and Norwegian work culture. He states that he has noticed that *“Norwegian workers are quite lazy, you know- they show up, you know, when they are supposed to be there, and they leave when they are supposed to be there and maybe they do their work and maybe they don’t.”* He explains that he was *“expected to produce at all times”*. He expresses that this difference in perceived expectations *“annoyed [him] at first, but then [he] thought: ‘you know, I actually like working with dummies, because then you don’t have to do so much to stand out. So, it is actually an opportunity.’”*

The informants describe that this difference in work culture can stand in the way of their sense of belonging in their workplace. It can be both positive and negative for their success and satisfaction with their work environments.

5.2 Belonging

This section addresses the informant’s search of a sense of belonging and the inevitability of feeling out of place in a country which is not one’s own. One factor which plays into the extent to which these immigrants are able to integrate into the Norwegian community is language. The informants discuss the ways in which they have both struggled and succeeded in social environments and at work, as well as the experience of having an impeded career trajectory. Furthermore, the informants delve into the ways in which these factors play into ebb and flow of their self- confidence.

5.2.1 Language and Work

Central to the sense of belonging in the work place is that of communication. For many of the informants the issue of language stood in the way of acquiring work in their field. Some have managed to find work where language is not all that relevant, others have found work where the business language is English, while others discuss their experiences working in a foreign language.

When it comes to seeking work, Charlotte deems that language *“is THE most important thing.”* Isabel also realized the importance of Norwegian language skills when she was seeking work, saying *“one thing that really hit home”* after about six months of applying for English speaking jobs, was: *“everyone else who was applying for that job, spoke both Norwegian and English.”* She explains, *“Everyone here in Norway speaks English almost as well as I do- they write in English, they read in English, all of that. So me applying to a English language position, isn't actually me having a leg up. It is actually me lacking something.”*

Adam expressed that his challenge with language and work was the greatest in the first years of his residency in Norway. He managed to find a summer job about a year after arriving, at a tool shop. Adam explains, *“I only got [the job] through the connection... because I definitely did not qualify to work there because I didn't have much Norwegian.”* He pointed out that during the summer *“nobody is around,”* and that it seems that in *“July and August, they are ok with hiring people with uh, less language skills.”* Adam continued, *“And that was very apparent to me, that I don't belong there because I got criticized for not being able to speak Norwegian by the customers a lot.”*

For Peter, who works in the field of IT, it was not difficult to procure employment where the company's *“business language was English.”* However, this did not change the fact that at his first job, he *“was the only one speaking English, everything was in Norwegian.”* He expressed that this was isolating saying, *“the people that I would go to lunch with would only speak Norwegian.”* This was frustrating to him and he would think: *“‘I am right here’, you know?’”* He admits, *“It didn't make me want to learn the language. Because to me it was like ‘you guys are being exclusive- you are excluding me because I can't just suddenly- *beep* learn Norwegian,’ it doesn't work like that.”* He goes on to explain his logic: *“They grow up*

speaking English- I don't think they know what it feels like to be left out. Um and so that, that is... ironic, because they are all about inclusion.”

To this day, Peter has not continued to learn Norwegian, but it also has not stood in his way at work to any great extent. He has since begun to work in a more international environment where his coworkers speak English and he explains that his current colleagues give him “support... a lot of the Norwegians here encourage [him to speak Norwegian].” Peter does feel good about the situation saying, “That is good. I like that”. Additionally, he later concedes, “You shouldn't live here if you can't speak the language. Its, pretty stupid that I have let so much time go by and I haven't completed my studies.”

Victoria, similarly, has struggled with exclusion at work related due to language. She is in a position of leadership in the restaurant she works at. However, she explains, “I have a new boss at work who refuses to speak- I write him emails in English and he only responds in Norwegian... and he runs his meetings only in Norwegian even though he knows that I have to participate and knows... that I don't speak or write Norwegian.” Despite having a job which she received without the requirement of speaking Norwegian, her lack of language skills remains a barrier in being able to fully accomplish her job. She recognizes how easily this happens, explaining that the meetings would end up “completely in Norwegian” because “they would get one question and they would shift it to Norwegian and leave me out so I had to concentrate really hard on trying to pick up what they were saying.”

Isabel began working in barnehages as a vikår and began taking Norwegian classes while she continued seeking a career- track employment. She later reflects on the impact that language has on her experience saying, “I think that it depends on what you want to work in. If I had stayed on the barnehage track, I would have aimed for the Bergenstest (Advanced Norwegian Exam), but at this point at my life and career, Bergenstest doesn't seem like something that I am going to need.” She was eventually able to find work in an international company, where her English writing skills are being put to use. She explains that outside of ordering “cake for the office in Norwegian” and talking to “the assembly guy who set up this desk,” she feels that speaking Norwegian “isn't really necessary” for her work. However, she explains that there are still reasons why she wants to improve her language skills, “If I have kids here, I think I will try harder... I don't want to be that mom who can't understand her kids and... can't understand at the schools and stuff like that.”

Eliana has reached a point of fluency with the Norwegian. She explains the challenges of working in her second language, *“I mean I think I put up with constantly feeling frustrated and like I am not as smart as- I can’t express myself as intelligently as I am supposed to, because I am doing it in my second language.”* She describes a recent situation at work, *“On Friday I found myself really frustrated in a meeting because I knew that I was really missing the nuance, and I might even be offending my coworker- like this is kind of a tense meeting.”* At times, she admits: *“I so badly wish I could just switch to my first language. And I can’t really. Because the expectation is that I- you know, this is Norwegian, and that is what I signed up for.”*

5.2.2 Socializing at Work and in the Community

When it comes to socializing in work environments, the majority of the informants have had limited success in forming relationships which extend beyond their work environment. The informants often struggle to feel like they fit in, in their work environments and more broadly in their communities. For example, Bridget discusses that she is *“friendly with people at work,”* but that she has not *“done anything social with anyone at work, outside of work, aside from group things outside work.”* Although she and her coworkers get along at work, no one ever says anything such as: *“You know what we should do... go get a coffee, or ...”* She only ever met one friend at a previous job in a café, a German who was her boss.

Eliana commutes to another town to get to work. She states, *“You know, I don’t think I have friends at work. Like there is no one that I see socially outside of work.”* She thinks that this is in part because she spends about half of her time *“working remotely”* from home. However, she also sees it as *“just a very Norwegian environment”* and that *“in some ways”* she and her coworkers *“don’t have a lot in common.”* She works in a company with a lot of men and *“people who are older than”* her, and she explains, *“I have trouble relating to them because I can’t talk about my kids and my daycare and my cabin.”* The one person that she has been able to connect with is Anne, a woman who is *“probably in her mid 40’s,”* who is Norwegian but *“her mom is American.”* When they are with others, they *“always speak Norwegian,”* but if they are alone together or having lunch they will *“speak English, because she says she misses having people to speak English with.”* Eliana enjoys talking with Anne but explains *“it is not like I hang out with Anne after work.”* Eliana, along with other informants discussed

that they often do not find things in common with their Norwegian colleagues but connect best with those who have English skills and/or experience abroad.

The informants who work in a more international environment, often have found greater success in finding social connections in their work environments. Isabel explains that she has *“yet to make any Norwegian friends of [her] own.”* Although she does have some Norwegian friends who she has met through her boyfriend. She explains, *“I don't work with any... I take that back. One of the Norwegian, several of the Norwegian women at work I have become friends with, but they, I didn't interact with them in a Norwegian context, we speak English together.”* Because of that she doesn't *“really consider them Norwegian friends.”* Isabel speaks Norwegian at an intermediate level, so when it comes to communicating, she explains, *“I don't have any friends where I speak Norwegian with them exclusively.”*

A few of the informants discussed the ways in which the Norwegian socializing culture works against them. Adriana explains that *“people can be a bit more closed off”*. She describes how her husband has a group of friends consisting of *“six couples and they have all known each other since middle school.”* She gets the sense that they are in *“this little group together and no one is allowed in that group,”* although she is invited because she is married to her husband. However, she remains an outsider: *“I still don't feel like I am in, because I don't really reach out to them and they don't reach out to me.”*

Peter also portrayed a similar sentiment regarding the entrenchment of Norwegian friend groups. Peter explains, *“One thing that I learned about Norwegians is that they tend- and I see this with my own kids, they tend to make friends with people at school, but then that doesn't change the rest of their life.”* For a person like him, who has moved many times in his life, he perceives this as *“bizarre.”* He describes how his ex-wife's grandmother *“still hung around with people she went to barnehage with- and she is like, right now she is 90-something years old.”* For Peter this is unfathomable, and remarks: *“I don't even remember my kindergarten.”*

In Adam's experience *“Norwegians are easy to be friends with once you become friends with them.”* However, he has had to adjust how he goes about getting to know them. He continues, *“It is important to point out that to become friends with Norwegians is a little different. Because they are a little bit- I don't know- skeptical. Uhm. And not very open to new*

friendship.” He describes one experience in which he “*found that out the hard way.*” He explains that he met a “*Norwegian guy at a party and really hit it off.*” Adam tried calling him the next week and “*he pretended not to know*” him. He explained what happened to other Norwegian friends who responded, “*Oh no, you got to be careful when you call them and stuff like that.*” He has also found that Norwegians are “*both excited and intimidated*” when talking to him. He has found that they “*love speaking English, which is what makes learning Norwegian really difficult.*”

5.2.3 Language and Confidence

Several of the informants expressed the link between their ability to express themselves and the confidence that they felt living in Norwegian society; confidence to communicate effectively is a significant factor in the informant’s sense of belonging.

Isabel explains that her confidence was primarily based on her ability to communicate effectively: “*My confidence took a huge blow when I first moved here... I went from, I mean, again not being conceded, I have a PhD. I can communicate, I can express myself. I am never at a loss for words, and then I move here, and I couldn't even order a cup of coffee, without someone asking me three times what I meant...*” Isabel connects her ability to communicate to her identity, the loss of that aspect of her identity lead to a decrease in confidence.

Bridget explains that although she now is “*completely fluent,*” she still does not feel confident in her ability to speak Norwegian. She states, “*I still double check myself before I say some things... I guess that is what sort of surprised me, that even after so many years, that is still there.*” Bridget recognizes that she is not as confident as she once was, saying, “*My self-confidence... has taken a hit. I am a lot less outgoing. I feel like I am a lot more quiet. I don't speak as much. I don't engage in conversations as much because you spend so much time trying to follow the conversation and listening- 'oh that was a joke she just said' ... you just laugh because everyone else is laughing.*” She later reflects that on this discomfort, “*You kind of put on this face, um. You know. I feel like I am less social and that I am not my real self.*” Bridget also links her ability to communicate effectively with her identity. However, later in the interview she also recognizes the fact that some of her highest points since coming to Norway were related to successes with language. Bridget gives further examples, “*Like going*

to a meeting, like a parent meeting and realizing- oh I understood everything at this meeting. Or being able to think back- oh I went to this meeting last year and now I am getting it.” She goes on to say: *“I also really enjoy when people, Norwegians ask me where I am from and I ask them: ‘go guess’ and they don’t guess an English-speaking country.”* Bridget touches on the ways that foreign language failures and successes play into her confidence.

When it comes to socializing with Norwegians, several of the informants discussed the importance of speaking Norwegian. Isabel states, *“I don’t think that I will ever make Norwegian friends if I do not speak Norwegian. In a social situation, you have to speak Norwegian.”* Adriana, gives her perspective, saying that at first, she *“didn’t speak a lot of Norwegian”* and that because of that *“a lot of people refused to speak English.”* She thinks that *“they are just shy and don’t want to speak English. So, a lot of people just yeah... and in social settings, people switch over to Norwegian.”* She seemed to understand their perspective but admitted that she often sat *“clueless for a long time not really knowing what people are saying and just kind of bored.”* She concluded that at the time it was *“very isolating, I felt very alone. I mean everyone switches over to Norwegian and then people don’t really reach out and then you feel really alone and it’s like “why did I bother coming?”* Such a sense of isolation, while in social settings was a common theme expressed by the informants.

Victoria expresses this situation related to her involvement in a “Barselsgruppe.” She explains that when you have a child in Norway, the government puts you into a *“group of eight women in your neighborhood who all go to the same health station to meet once a week,”* she expounds: *“after your baby is born and they become your support group.”* Having recently had a child, she explains *“When I meet with them, I feel uncomfortable.”* She gets the impression that there is an *“inability for them to express themselves or ask questions because I am there, and they have to speak in English for me.”* She feels *“awkward”* and almost guilty *“because some of them cannot express themselves or they are shy about speaking English... they definitely hold back because when [she leaves], or [gets] up to tend to [her] child, um they just automatically start yapping.* Victoria recognizes that this dynamic is because of their *“language barrier.”* She expresses that she has noticed this situation unfold in other environments, having been told that *“the reason I have not been included in things like Julebord (Christmas dinner) with my husband’s friends, group of friends, who are supposedly my friends too, the reason I don’t get invited to those things, or*

girls dinners is because of language.” Victoria links her isolation to her lack of language skills.

One significant narrative within Charlotte’s interview, was that of her feelings on language and how it has impacted her experience being in Norway. Charlotte explains that often when she is socializing, *“They will accommodate you, and you just want to relax after work because you have been speaking all the time at work. Like it is so nice to slip into [speaking English].”* However, she feels conflicted because she also really does not *“like inconveniencing people.”* She continues, *“Like if I know that people are uncomfortable speaking English, or if I am in a bigger circle where I am the only person speaking English, I won't. I don't want to take up that space.”*

Charlotte compares herself to some of her *“particularly male”* friends, saying, *“they speak with such confidence and I hear them making mistakes constantly, and I admire that confidence, I just, I didn't have it. Like I was so scared of making mistakes, disappointing people.”* She gives an example, of a situation in which she feels particularly uncomfortable: *“I never feel like I can even have a conversation meeting a Norwegian without talking about ‘where are you from?’ or my language skills. Like it becomes a topic of conversation, and I know that when I am truly fluent, no one will be speaking about that.”* Charlotte feels that it *“puts you on guard, it makes you feel like you can’t disappoint that person, which is possibly a stranger, which is absurd... you just feel like you are under a microscope.”* This self-consciousness stands in the way of her communicating in a confident manner. Charlotte explains that she became particularly aware of the extent to which this was weighing on her when she spent a year back in the United States, *“There wasn't that language barrier... you realize that you don't need [Norwegian language skills] outside of this small microsphere... all the frustrations that I had built up are so focused on language, and it feels real heavy sometimes.”*

5.2.4 A Shift in Confidence

When asked about their level of confidence, men and women gave significantly different responses. The male respondents expressed that their level of confidence was not greatly affected, however, the female respondents described in great detail the nuances of their shift in confidence. The informants linked their shift in confidence to several domains including

challenges finding fulfilling work, struggling to fit in, shifts in their level of independence, and differences between Norwegian and American culture. Many of the informants discussed having lost a significant amount of confidence in the immediate aftermath of their move. Some informants describe having regained their overall confidence leaving them more confident than before their move. This confidence is related to the informant's sense of belonging in their new home.

The male informants did not describe any significant change in their level of confidence. For example, David simply said, *"Um, it's about the same really, to be honest."* Similarly, Peter responded with, *"No, I don't think so. Maybe a little bit with language."* Adam also said, *"Not a great change [in confidence],"* but then expounded on his experience by explaining, *"I have toned it down in that sense of- just speaking my mind like I was used to."* He adds that his confidence has helped him *"get what [he] wants in Norway."* Adam continues, *"When I do speak English with a loud American accent, you tend to get attention in a foreign country. That has worked for me. But when you live here long enough, you tend to act more like the people around you, so yes, I have been a little more calmer."* This gives the sense that although his inward feeling of confidence has not greatly changed, the move to Norway has impacted the way in which he expresses himself.

In contrast to the male informants, all of the female informants expressed a decrease in confidence, at least for a time. Bridget states that the authorization process impacted the way that she sees herself, *"I mean I think most of it had to do with that five year process and basically like an entire bureaucracy telling you "you're not good enough, you are not good enough, you are not good enough"...you start to feel like it is coming from everywhere even though it is not."* Although Bridget finally got the authorization to work as a nurse in Norway, she still has not been able to continue working as a midwife. When it comes to this topic, the *"nightmare"* that she has been through in the authorization process has made her self-confidence go *"down in the depths over the last eight years."* Bridget explains, *"I experience a lot of self-doubt about if I can do it or not [be a midwife]- and this whole process of fighting to get my licensure and fighting to get a job, I feel like it has really sucked out my desire of wanting to be a midwife... I don't know, I don't even know if I want to do it anymore."*

However, she does portray a yearning to return to midwifery throughout the interview. She mentions paths that she has discovered to make that a reality. One option would be to

commute to a hospital that is *“like 45 minutes away.”* However, Bridget is not sure she is willing to *“get into the car after a night shift and drive for 45 minutes in a snowstorm to get home and go to bed.”* She also describes how she does *“sort of have a standing offer to come and do some training, and kind of get (her) fingers wet again.”* The problem is that this offer is in Oslo, which is a few hours away from where she lives. Between having two young children and work, she is *“trying to figure out”* when she can *“fit that in.”* She expounds, *“I think, I think I need to do it, both to see if I still want to do it- like if that desire is still there, that passion is still there, and to be able to say to the boss in Skogerud, ‘Ok there you go- I got six weeks of training and I have delivered another 20 babies and they said I know what I am doing.’”*

Before the move, Bridget describes herself as having been *“pretty self-confident.”* Recounting being *“active,”* and having *“a good support network”* with her colleagues. She was able to help *“support [her] spouse.”* And that they were *“pretty on par in terms of how [they] contributed to things around the house.”* However, after the move, this dynamic changed significantly. She states, *“I feel, like the balance between my husband and I has shifted. And that I am much more dependent on him, than I feel like I was for nine years.”* This lack of confidence was primarily rooted in her lack of language skills. Bridget’s husband, having lived in Norway for some years previous to their move *“could speak pretty fluent Norwegian,”* while Bridget could not. Bridget continues: *“anything that came in the mail, you know, he had to read it, he had to call the plumber, he went to the bank and got the loans... he went to the grocery store and you know, told me what the stuff was. Everything. I felt like the dynamic completely switched.”*

Similarly, Adriana attributes a loss in confidence to the challenge she had finding work. *“Yeah when you get so many, when you send out so many applications and you get so many no’s, your confidence goes really low.”* She goes on to say that she felt *“invisible”* the first four years she lived in Norway, she repeats, *“I just felt invisible in the society... When you feel like you don't matter and you don't exist, your whole confidence just goes down...”* She links her decrease in confidence to a lack of connections to the Norwegian society.

The move to another country itself seemed to have a jolting effect on some of the informants. Throughout the interview, Victoria emphasizes how confident she was in her life in the United States. She explains, *“I was an extremely confident person, very independent, wasn't*

an anxiety filled person before I moved.” She explains that things changed drastically when she moved to Norway: *“I became very dependent on my husband, I still catch myself not going and asking a stranger a question, directions, or open a store because I feel held back by language and not feeling confident to either speak my broken Norwegian to them, or because I am afraid if I speak English to them, they won't respond well to me.”* She describes that when she lived in the United States, she was happy to do things on her own, but she always *“thinks twice”* about it now. She states, *“I am a much more timid quiet person in Norway.”* She feels that her personality has changed and had almost lost touch with part of her identity. Nevertheless, Victoria explains that when she found her job *“things shifted.”* She explains that before she found work, she was extremely isolated because she *“didn't want to go out and do things.”* But her life transformed when she began her position, *“After getting a job, and having a routine and somewhere to go- more support with being a foreigner in this country, I- it started to build up some confidence and I relaxed a lot.”*

Eliana similarly said, *“I think in the US I was confident. And I am trying to get back to that here.”* She thinks that part of the problem for her is a cultural difference between the United States and Norway. She explains *“that janteloven⁴, you know, there are very few opportunities here, to help you realize- or self-actualize. I am constantly feeling mediocre.”* She also mentioned that she feels more confident outside of her primary job. In addition to her office job, she has a side job as a teacher at an after-school program. She explains, *“In that job, I feel extremely confident, even though I am doing that in Norwegian as well. But I feel like I am really doing that well. And I feel like I know what I am doing.”* She notices that the difference is due to a different kind of expectation on her part. She continues, *“And I am not trying to climb any professional ladders there, I just love being with the kids in that way.”* She also recognizes that she has come a long way, *“Like I moved here, and I did make a new life and find new friends, and figure out where I could get what I needed... and have navigated kinds of these weird systems and things and like, I figured out how to make so much of it work for me. Like I do feel really confident in that.”* The experience of moving lead to

⁴ The term “Janteloven” (laws of jante), was coined by Aksel Sandemose a Danish born author who referenced “laws” which govern Scandinavian culture. Janteloven is a social code which lays particular emphasis on the collective, and disparages individual achievements. The term: *“communicates... this essential fear of individualism in Norwegian culture.”* (Avant & Knutsen, 1993)

another kind of confidence, she remarks, *“It’s the most challenging moments when you learn the most.”*

Charlotte sums up her experience saying, *“I think that, this move, especially the years after my education- which was such a safety net here when I first moved, it gave me a purpose- and navigating my decision to stay afterward, like stripped me of my confidence. And then rebuilt me.”* She talks about how she believes that part of the change is natural *“getting into your 30s.”* But much like Eliana, Charlotte recognizes that there is a confidence that comes from such an experience, *“I have earned this, I have earned these tools and like ‘try to take them away from me!’”* She feels stronger now.

5.2.5 Proximity to imagined future

Several of the informant expressed that their career trajectories have been significantly constrained due to the move to Norway. Many of them had a strong career before the move but have not been able to find the same kind of success in Norway. This disparity between what informants had imagined their future career to be like and the reality they come to face when they made the move has been difficult for the informants who have not found the success they once had or believed they would come to have. Those who have found a career which lines up with their imagined future show that can foster a sense of confidence and belonging.

Eliana expresses a loss in believing she will be able to make in impact. She has always been highly motivated and wanted to improve schools in her community. Before moving to Norway, Elaina *“thought [she] was going to run a school district someday.”* She imagined being the *“super intendant of a school district.”* Alternatively, she thought she *“would at least get into really top-level positions in school districts or even non-profits.”* There were people she looked up to who were *“only like 10 years older than”* she was, who had worked their way up to being in *“powerful”* and *“impactful”* positions effecting change on *“large scales.”* She has resigned to the belief that she will not obtain such a role in her future. She explains, *“I don’t think that is true anymore. I don’t think that I will ever have that kind of impact in Norway.”*

A common theme among the interviews was that of a shift in career trajectory, since moving to Norway. Bridget discusses her experience, *"I feel like my trajectory in the United States was on the way up and now I am kind of just flat."* She talks about how if she had remained, she *"would have been continuing on that trajectory, [her] career would have been more stable and [she] would have felt more secure in my role in the States, in [her] career."* However, when she reflects back on her time working as a midwife in the States she says, *"My life was also very different- I had one small child and life was just simpler... I just feel like my family and my kids have become more of a priority and a focus."* Several times throughout the interview she alludes to this choice she made, to focus on her family and put her career on the back- burner, because of the challenges she has faced in further developing her career in Norway.

Charlotte expresses a similar sentiment by saying, *"It is really, really depressing to be applying for some jobs that are identical to my first jobs coming out of college."* When she completed her bachelor's degree, she spent some time working in corporate sales in the States. She describes how she was in the third round of interviews for a job the month before, but she canceled it *"because [the position] was exactly the same."* She explains, *"I have no interest in it, so why keep climbing a ladder you have zero desire to be on? I was just so motivated to start making really good money, but I mean, at what cost?"* She explains that her experience in Norway feels *"like it has been a huge side track."*

In contrast, Peter discusses how his career has developed significantly since moving to Norway. He explains that he began to work at his current company *"to do a completely different job,"* and that after working for only a month, the person who had hired him *"quit, and went to another company."* The company then had a *"management gap"* and needed *"someone to run the department"*. They asked him, *"Can you do it?"* Later on, *"they created this totally new business group"* which they wanted him to *"run that until they found someone to do that."* After he did that project, he explains, *"I got to make my own job here- which is cool. So I- its, I am still in management, I run- basically my boss who's job I was doing, I am kind of like the number two for that. So not bad for an ex- cultist immigrant who came here with little expectations. You know?"* Peter has found significant success in Norway, and more job stability and security than he previously had in the States and generally, has the view that, *"When you take advantage of opportunities and you do what you can do, it doesn't matter what company you are in, for the most part- business is business."*

5.3 Being in Limbo

In this section, I have collected narratives which address the confusing position that the informants found themselves in. Informants experience paradoxes such as being overqualified for positions they are applying for and yet not qualified enough for those that align with their experience and education. Similarly, informants recognize ways in which they are among a privileged group of immigrants yet they still experiencing a sense of disadvantage. They grapple with feelings of guilt, that they are treated better than others. Some of the informants describe the ways in which their experiences have led to their passionate support of immigrant rights.

5.3.1 Overqualified yet not Qualified Enough

Informants expressed that one way in which they experienced a sense of limbo, was being both overqualified for the jobs that they were applying for, and yet not qualified enough to receive the position. One example of this phenomenon is when Bridget was awaiting approval for her authorization to work as a nurse and began working as a nursing assistant. As stated earlier, Bridget expresses that on the one hand, the job was far below her level of expertise, and yet she *“wasn't qualified to do other things.”*

Before Victoria moved to Norway, she had owned a catering business and worked as a personal chef to a prominent figure in the United States. She talks about how it has been a challenge to be recognized for her skills, *“Building up a name for myself is a big challenge because I am starting from scratch and you have to be kind of respectful of the people who have already established themselves in our industry here.”* She compares herself to her husband by saying that he *“works in the tech industry in advertising and marketing, so he can just be the single person, go in and do his job well, people get to know who he is and he just continues.”* For her industry it is important that she become acquainted with others in the field, *“I have to get to know everyone else, have them respect me and know me, and allow me in and try my food and test me as an artist. It's a different dance, so I am going to be on the outside for a long time and that is a really big challenge for me.”*

She goes on to explain some of the additional challenges she would face if she decided to open her own business, “*restaurant or cafe or store,*” which is her goal for the future. She has come to the conclusion that in Norway, she would face significantly more obstacles. “*It is ten times harder here than it would be in the US. I could easily have opened a restaurant, I was in the process of doing it in the States- no problem with contacts, funding, you know bureaucratic things, hurdles. But here it is a totally different monster.*” Thus, she feels constrained and expresses that although she does intend to “*give it a shot for another year or two.,*” Yet this hinderance to her career development continues to be a “*huge issue for [her] and for [her] husband.*”

When Isabel first arrived in Norway, she had recently completed her PhD in history. She describes applying for any job she could think of, starting with the University in “*administration*” and hoping that if she worked at the university she could be “*more in touch with*” research opportunities. She also applied for “*data firms in positions for archival work and data collection...teaching positions... school librarian jobs.... at the national library, and national archives... everything.*” She described, “*the one callback I ever got, the one call I got from any employer and I got one letter, telling me I was over qualified from some data collection firm. I didn't get a response from any other- any other application ever.*” Isabel was falling in between the cracks- overqualified for the majority of the jobs she was seeking and yet underqualified because of a lack of language skills.

She hoped to work academia or find a post doctorate program upon moving to Norway. Unfortunately, she was not able to make that happen. Isabel has since become successful in another career, and although happy and grateful for that position, she still thinks “*about going back into academia.*” Isabel divulges: “*I check the UiO (University of Oslo) website a lot for... Well not a lot, but periodically, for positions within my research field...I just watch and if anything, ever comes up that is like travelist or comparative history that I did, then I look at it and see if it is anything that my existing research could be used for. I haven't found anything yet.*”

David, who moved to Norway in his late 30's, had already made a career for himself in IT management in the States. When he moved to Norway to be together with his wife, he explains that he struggled finding work. He “*tried all sorts of industries, accounting firms, computer work of course.*” He explains, “*I would have settled for grocery work as well,*

restaurants, retail. Anything, because I need to make a living.” He came to find it extremely difficult to find work in the smaller town where he and his wife live. David was willing to do any job, but explains that employers either saw him as being overqualified, or “*disqualified*” him because of his lack of language skills. He described one interview in which the employer was concerned that he “*was going to be dealing with Norwegian customers, especially the older generation*” explaining, “*it would be better if [he] was able to speak Norwegian.*” Although he was a highly qualified candidate, David remained unemployed for nearly four years. (He did do some projects for his old employer in the United States, however, it was no more than one to ten hours a month). He eventually was able to find a job in his field with the help of his NAV⁵ caseworker.

5.3.2 A “different” kind of immigrant

All of the informants have come to reflect on their position as an immigrant and the majority of them have built friendships and relationships with people from other countries. They recognize that they have had an easier time integrating in Norway, than immigrants from other countries. This puts them in an uncomfortable position; one in which they recognize that they are privileged, and yet not on par with Norwegians.

Many of the informants uncomfortably admit that they are treated better than other immigrants. For example, Victoria describes that “*in comparison to maybe uh, minority immigrants,*” she gets treated differently. She explains, “*Like I am white, so people automatically assume at first glance that you are Norwegian.*” However, when it comes to work she has found that, “*It is pretty standard across the board once people realize that you are not Norwegian they are all kind of treated the same... Based off my experience at work with a bunch of other foreigners- from Poland, Nepal, and Hungary. We are generally all treated the same.*”

On a similar note, Bridget explains how she has “*white skin*”, so she “*blends in.*” Yet she finds herself identifying with other immigrants, “*particularly immigrants of color.*” Bridget gives an example, “*Like if they are a patient... I talk to the Polish mother who, you know,*

⁵ NAV (Arbeids- og Velferdsforvaltningen) has caseworkers who assist in the search for employment (NAV, 2009)

cleans apartments, and I ask her how long she has lived here and I tell her 'you know basically I had to move here and learn Norwegian' and, I feel like I kind of identify with them, but I am not sure if they identify with me." She gives a sense that she feels she falls into a different kind of category and that other immigrants do not feel they can identify with her privileged position. In general, she feels., *"That other people look at us in the same way- me and a Somali immigrant or a Polish immigrant."* However, when it comes to her work situation, she feels that things are more equal, *"Although I did have a Polish coworker- another nurse, and I think people saw us, you know we were on the same level."* Similar to Victoria, she senses that at the workplace, she and her coworkers are all respected and treated in the same way.

Adriana describes what she sees as an *"immigrant ranking here."* She explains, Adriana describes what she sees as an *"immigrant ranking here."* She explains: *"if you are from certain countries then you are really looked down upon. So maybe when I say that I am from the US it is like 'oh ok,' but if I had said I was from somewhere else... I get the feeling from some people that ... I would have been looked down upon more."* Adriana sees that how immigrants are treated differently *"[depending] on where you are from."* Adriana has a Hispanic background and has the sense that how she is treated changes when people realize she is American. *"People put me in the same pot with other people until they found out that I am from the US and then maybe I am lifted up a little bit... and maybe they act a little different."*

Adriana remains in a position of limbo, recognizing the ways in which she is privileged, and the ways in which she is discriminated against. Another example she shared was how she noticed a difference in the way that the family that she worked as an au pair for treated her compared to her replacement who was from the Philippines. *"They actually hired a new au pair a week or two before I was leaving and so we kind of, um, overlapped so I could train this new au pair."* She explained that she remained in contact with *"this new girl"* after she had moved on. She explained that the new au pair *"said it was worse than when I left."* Previously when Adriana worked as an au pair, she explained that *"the grandma would barge into [her] room."* The new au pair told her that at some point, *"the grandma... moved into the room with her."* Adriana recognized that the new au pair was so desperate to maintain her position, that it left her extremely vulnerable to exploitation. *"She had a son in the Philippines, and she really needed the money."* Here Adriana expresses although she was

mistreated, she was still in a better position than the Filipino au pair who took over her position.

When it comes to applying for jobs, Eliana explains that she does think *“that being an American, [she has] a disadvantage.”* She quickly clarifies, *“I don't mean to whine or complain- because I know you know I have it easier than other immigrants.”* However, when she is applying for an open position against Norwegians, she believes that *“there is such a strong preference, more so in Norway in the US, there is such a fear of the outside or the unknown.”* She explains that an employer will look at her CV and see *“the name of her school”* and her *“previous jobs,”* and even though she can describe them in Norwegian and she is *“fluent enough to work in Norwegian”*, she contends that *“there is such a strong preference for the familiar, that I think that if I am presented and a candidate is presented with similar or even worse experience and background than me, I think the Norwegian will get the position over me every single time.”*

Isabel noticed that she was treated differently than other workers, when she worked at the barnehage, and expresses that she *“felt guilty about that.”* She explains that when she worked there, she *“didn't speak much Norwegian”* and that most of the other vikårs were foreigners from other countries. She mentions that she *“saw blatant discrimination against people who were probably more experienced in the barnehage, had better Norwegian and had lived in Norway longer”* than she had. This came in the form of the ways that the parents of the children treated her, *“the parents would be really nice to [her] and really really rude to someone else.”* She interprets, *“What it told me was that they were just being nice because they, they would probably say the same thing to me if they felt they could. That they were judging me, but it was just, they knew that they couldn't because I was white- I am American.”*

Peter points out that he finds he is better able to *make connections with people who have “more international experience.”* He explains, *“The ones who have always lived here- who say things like ‘oh we don't like immigrants,’ and I am like ‘hello?!’... ‘Well you are the good kind of immigrant.’... ‘Really?’... ‘Its just, yeah, I have no use for that.”* He is grateful that he now works for a company that *“doesn't treat people differently.”* He does state that *“as an American”* he is probably *“treated differently than someone from Pakistan... Sadly- I have not met many Norwegians that like people from the Middle East. The ‘bad immigrants’ as they call them. And I don't like that. But then again I come from a part of the States where*

that is normal.” He remarks that he is bothered by the discrimination, but that he does not see a great difference to how people are treated in Norway in comparison to how they view “*non-cowboys,*” in the American South, where he is from.

Along with being treated differently on the street and at work, some of the informants shed light on the ways in which they are treated differently by official personnel or immigration authorities. Eliana describes how she was able to enter the country, “*since I am an American, I had the privilege of coming here on a tourist visa and intentionally overstay the tourist visa until the family permit got processed.*” In fact, “*that is what the immigration told*” her to do. She recognizes that it would not have been a possibility “*if I came from a country that did not have the tourist visa. I would have to wait the 13 months for the fiancée. So I feel lucky for that, I guess.*” She later comes back to the same point, “*I think I am treated better ... in the immigration system because I am an American. I think I would be discriminated against if I was Somali or Iraqi. Um, even if I was here on a work permit. So I do think that the system is kind of set up.*”

Isabel has a similar experience and describes how when she left the country without having legal status to attend her graduation. Upon reentry, she recalls, “*Nobody asked me, nobody stopped me anywhere in this process. I was never once was asked to produce a residence card or anything.*” She said that she had a “*very strange moment of realizing*” that immigration personnel “*don’t look at you that hard if you seem like you are ok.*”

5.3.3 Personal Identification: A Confusion of Terms

Many of the informants describe being confused as to which term they should use to identify their status in Norway. Some terms include immigrant, expat, migrant, and foreigner. How they identify is impacted by their understanding of the definitions of these terms, the ways in which those around them interpret these terms, and how they perceive their standing in Norway. Several of the informants discussed a sense of being in limbo, not really feeling that any of the terms fit their experience.

Some of the informants refer to themselves as immigrants throughout the course of the interview, but when asked directly how they see themselves; they struggle to find the right term. For example, Bridget first said, “*I feel like I identify as an immigrant,*” However, not a

minute later, Bridget explains why she doesn't like the term. She talks about an experience when her mother-in-law, "who has like Norwegian and Swedish heritage," is "tickled by the fact that her grandfather immigrated to the states and now her son has immigrated back to Norway." Bridget "got really mad" when her mother in law said, "I tell people that you immigrated." Bridget does not like how "permanent" it sounds saying, "I got really pissed when she said that, and I was like: I wish you wouldn't say that'." After relating this, she laughed, recognizing that her irritation was slightly unfounded. She describes how she later discussed the situation with her husband, who said, "Well, what do you want her to say?," to which she responded, "I don't know- that we just moved there". He then pointed out, "immigrating is moving... like that is what it is." She sums up the experience, "I guess I don't always call myself an immigrant, I would more like expat I identify with."

Similarly, Victoria grappled with the subject saying, "I would definitely say expat is more... fitting. Um, immigrant, I guess since I come from country of immigrants- feels like... and maybe I haven't ever thought about it, so now that I am talking about it... it does make more sense." After pondering for a moment, she continues, "Maybe it's because I don't know if this is a permanent move. This- living here, could have an expiration date, it might not. But that door is still wide open, but I think that is probably why. If you immigrate to a country, it kind of feels like this is your new home, you are not going back." Victoria later talks about how she and her husband often talk about moving back to the United States, and that she is "going to give it a shot for another year or two;" however, that fact that she "can't do a lot with [her] career potentially" is a "huge issue" for her. She expresses feeling unsettled, explaining why she feels more comfortable with the term of expat. She states, "Expats kind of seems like- ok you live here, but maybe it is only for 15 years but, you are probably going home at some point."

Some of the informants lay more focus on the technical definitions of the words. For example, Eliana states, "I really am an immigrant. Like if you look at the Webster's dictionary definition- it says that a person who has immigrated to- that's what I did. And I left everything that I knew in the US. And my family lives over there." Similarly, Peter explains why he does not technically qualify as an expat, "See I am not an expat because I am on a local contract. If I were on an expat contract, things would be very different for me. But expats generally are only here for a short period of time, and then they go home." He explains that he is an immigrant because he "came here to live, not just to stay here for a few years."

Charlotte explains her thoughts, *"I do, I do identify with an expat, in the way that like society has defined that term- but I do feel like it is a term reserved for white people. Regardless of how long you are staying in a country. I feel like I do feel like it still pertains for me, because I do have intentions of moving back someday."* The intention of moving back to the States for several of the informants makes this topic more complicated. She continues by saying, *"I feel borderline identifying with that [the term immigrant] though because it has been 8 years. But I feel like that term is reserved for people who are intending in every way to live out all of their days somewhere. So that would be disingenuous to call myself an immigrant."*

Adriana plans to stay in Norway for the long term and discusses how the fact that she has obtained Norwegian citizenship changes the equation. *"When it comes down to it- I am an immigrant, because I migrated here. And I am a foreigner too, but I am a Norwegian citizen now so I guess the foreigner term wouldn't- I mean I am but if you are going with these terms it wouldn't apply so much because I am a citizen."*

Several of the informants touched on a deeper meaning of these terms, particularly in Norwegian society as they have experienced it. Adriana goes on to explain that word *"immigrant"* is *"so negatively charged here in Norway, so it is not such nice term really,"* but that she does not have a better word to explain her status; *"That is what I would say that I am."* She feels that the term *"expat- it just sounds so lofty,"* she continues, *"It sounds like you don't want to admit that 'I am an immigrant so I am going to call myself an expat. '... I guess I don't really like the term expat either because it sounds too fake, or it just sounds like someone who is here for a short time, but they are going to go home, but I have no plans of going home right now..."*

Adam explains that in his experience, *"When you say the word immigrant, I think Norwegian... they don't think American. I think they think- immigrating for the better life sort of person."* He later states, *"I think immigrant has a negative connotation to it, even though it shouldn't, I feel like in Norway it does."* He clearly does not identify with this version of the definition. He personally thinks that *"anyone who comes from another country and moves here is an immigrant"* and that by that definition he does see himself as an immigrant. However, *"If it comes to looking for the better life- no I am not an immigrant. I didn't come here for a better life."* Similarly, Peter feels that the distinction is based entirely on the

circumstance, *“I mean those words in and of themselves- there is no denigration, it is the connotation that they are used in- the context that generally determines whether someone is being an asshole or not.”*

5.3.4 Perceived Discrimination

Informants further discussed their own experiences with discrimination in the community, at work and in the job seeking process. They share how conflicting such a situation can be.

Adriana is one of only a couple informants who is noticeably, not ethnically Norwegian. This has led to many experiences where she feels disrespected and discriminated against. *“I get asked often where I am from and it is like- I get annoyed because, well as you may probably know, Norwegians don't really talk to each other in public or strangers- but just random people will come up to me and ask, “where are you from”. And that really bothers me, like it happens quite often.”* This sense of being singled out for this reason, makes Adriana uncomfortable. She explains that it is often *“first thing that they say”* to her. She talks about an experience in a previous job where someone she did not know *“just came up to”* her and asked her, *“Are you from Brazil?”* She told him that she was not and *“just walked away,”* thinking *“Why do you have to know?”* The same thing happened at a work meeting the day before the interview, where someone asked her, *“Where are your roots from?”*, and it was *“the only thing he said to”* her. This makes her *“feel so uncomfortable”* and *“annoyed.”* She describes it as *“so exhausting.”* She continues, *“I am trying to come up with some answer or something, but I haven't figured it out yet. But it annoys me a lot actually.”*

Adriana shares another experience she had, in which she perceived discrimination. This took place while being interviewed for a position relating to her education in social work. She describes how *“the person who was doing the interview, was more impressed by the fact that [she] was American than [her] qualifications.”* Adriana explains that she *“kept talking about how I could come and teach her kid English, because she saw that I had been a private tutor and that I have tutored in English. And she is like, ‘oh you can come teach my kid!’”* Adriana was confused by this and asked, *“Uh what does this have to do with the job?”* The interviewer kept bringing this up throughout the interview, and Adriana *“found it really odd.”* Adriana realized that the interview *“didn't go that great,”* and at the end of the interview the interviewer stated, *“If you are still interested, I will give you my number and you can like*

tutor my kid.'" This made Adriana *"really uncomfortable."* In this case, Adriana's background made her vulnerable to mistreatment. The interviewer did not take Adriana seriously as a candidate for the position and did not treat her in a professional manner.

Other informants also discussed their perception of discrimination in the job-seeking process. After spending a couple years applying for a career track job, Isabel describes sensing that a part of her problem was that she has a *"Slavic, very eastern European"* sounding last name. She and her boyfriend came up with the idea of *"trying to apply to some of the same sort of things I had been doing, but using his last name, instead of my last name, just to see if that would make a difference."* She explains, *"We never actually had to do it because I got my job,"* but that *"it was a really low point of feeling kind of- like you don't want to think that... like that is what they are making their decision on... I knew that it was probably a possible factor in my struggle."* She explains that her boyfriend, who is actively involved in the *"recruitment process in his work"* mentioned that they do look at names. He had told her about how someone with *"a very clearly foreign name applied,"* and that their *"whole søknad (application) was in Norwegian, perfect Norwegian."* His colleagues suspected that *"this person who applied doesn't actually speak Norwegian perfectly,"* although they did however *"call them in and give them a chance."* Thinking back she wonders, *"I wish I knew for sure. I kind of almost wish that we would have run that experiment... I wonder if I would have gotten call backs at least."*

Eliana describes how she feels that *"there this hierarchy about people who are more deserving of immigrant status than others."* She continues, *"It's like I don't count as an immigrant. And yet, if my husband came to the US- even though he is white and blond and from Norway - he would be an immigrant. And people would love that."* She also mentions how her brother in law did an internship in the United States and *"everyone in the US was like: 'oh- like unique diverse Scandinavian- tell us your perspectives.'"* She explains how *"frustrated"* she felt that it was so easy for *"for him to fit in in the US."*

She compares this to a situation in which she applied for a job in the public sector. She explains that when a person applies for such a job they ask if *"you have any disabilities or handicaps, or are you an immigrant because they have to, by law, interview at least one person with disabilities or immigrant background... They don't have to hire them, but they just have to interview them."* She continues, *"I so badly want to click the box that says- 'are you*

an immigrant' - because I am. Right? I wasn't born here. I am an immigrant.” However, she explains that many of these applications define being an immigrant as *“if you or your parents were born in another country that is: and they basically list countries that are not um- the US, Australia, Canada, the UK, or Western Europe.”* She interprets this: *“What it means is that, if my mom was Pakistani and she moved to Norway when she was two and grew up here her whole life- and she spoke Norwegian- fluently Norwegian. And then I was born here, and my dad was fully Norwegian... that person would be allowed to say, 'Yes I am an immigrant'.”* She describes her frustration with this, *“And yet, I who was not born here, and who has worked by butt off to try to fit in here- I don't count as an immigrant. So I don't get any bonus points for that. And I think that is discriminatory as hell.”*

5.3.5 The Effect of Witnessing Discrimination

Several of the informants discussed a discomfort with the way that other immigrants are treated in Norway. Their own experience moving to Norway and the challenges associated have given some informants a heightened sense of injustice when they see others experience discrimination or see the ways in which they are more privileged.

Charlotte describes an experience she had which made this come to light, *“We had an altercation over on that bridge over there, where we were mistaken as Polish people.”* She did not go into detail about what occurred but expressed that it *“was a horrible experience and one that [she has] never experienced in Norway.”* She explained that the experience *“was everything that I always felt but could never articulate, just kind of blown up, where someone actually said it. It was horrible, it was a terrible thing to feel.”* These degrading comments gave her the insight into of a form of discrimination that she has never personally had to face, and it bothered her immensely.

For some of the informants, the experience of living in Norway has changed their views and led them to be more involved in their communities, particularly when it comes to supporting immigrants. Isabel talks about how her experience as an immigrant has made her *“feel much more engaged with the problems that are going on in the world with immigrants.”* She describes how she feels *“much more strongly now about things like the, like the border issues in America at the moment.”* And that she has become a *“huge advocate for helping those*

people and not treating them like criminals.” She admits that her views were “more balanced... before [she] was an immigrant.” She continues, “I have kind of gone on the extreme side where I am like: ‘no, I am an immigrant, I have the right to do this, I have made the hard choices and everything to become an immigrant and I am privileged ... and if anyone should be fighting for other people who want to immigrate- or need to immigrate, it should be people like myself.’”

David similarly has felt the need to become more involved due to his new found understanding of immigrants. He explains, *“I do recognize that others are in a different situation, and are treated differently, and sometimes I do speak up. Especially on Norwegian news groups, like Aftenposten and others, they are very vocal on their xenophobia.”* He recognizes that he is in a position of privilege, he is not mistreated as an American, but he feels uncomfortable with *“being given prudential”* treatment. He has noticed that there is a significant difference between the way that he is treated and *“especially those who are Muslims.”* He contends: *“It just irks me that they get mistreated because of that- because they are from another culture...Because I want to be treated as fair and on an even scale. I am an egalitarian.”* This has led him to his determination to stand up for the *“underdogs... I have to defend my fellow immigrants, even if they happen to be refugees or Muslim.”*

5.4 Evolution of Status and Identity

This section addresses the way in which the informants described the evolution of their status, identity, and values in connection with their move to Norway. One way in which the informants have lost status is that in their new home, they lack citizenship. Thus, informants remain inferior to native Norwegians, putting them and their spouses under pressure to remain employed so they can remain in the country. Additionally, informants linked a loss of status to a decrease in social capital, as well as challenges finding employment which aligned with their previous experience. Grappling with this change in status lead several informants to alter their values and priorities. Finally, informants explained shifts in their identity connected to their immigration. Many of the informants expressed feeling more “American,” while others feel like they have entirely lost a sense of belonging to any nation or culture.

5.4.1 Immigration and Rights

One of the most central factors that affect the informants is that of their legal right to live and work in Norway. The informants came to Norway for various reasons, but the majority of them either came to or stayed in Norway on a family visa. Thus, they have dealt with a variety of circumstances and challenges when navigating the bureaucracy surrounding this issue. Often this process came with long waits in which the individual was unable to work, did not have access to state healthcare services, or language classes (which are provided for free for those who come to Norway on a family reunification visa).

Eliana met her husband while working in Norway as part of a cultural exchange program. When she moved back to the States, her *“personal number was turned off.”* That meant that later, when she returned on a tourist visa to be with her husband, *“Norway did not officially recognize that [she] got here- as a full human being with all the rights of a Norwegian.”* She explains that for *“at least 6 months”* she was an *“undocumented immigrant, if you will.”* Arriving on a tourist visa and waiting for the paperwork to be processed was not illegal, in fact, she was told to do this by immigration authorities. This occurred during the refugee crisis, *“So it took a really long time for residence cards to be processed.”* Throughout this period of time, she lacked the rights that a citizen would have. She explains that in this time she *“couldn’t work”* and *“couldn’t even go to the doctor”* when she got sick. Other things were standing in the way of her ability to function as an independent person as well, she explains, *“I couldn’t get my own SIM card, like my husband had to get one in his name because SIM cards are attached to your personal number.”* Eliana struggled with a sense that she was not *“doing anything.”* She expounds on this, *“My husband would go to work in the morning and would come home in the afternoon, and like the very beginning I hadn’t done anything you know. Like I would just go grocery shopping at like three different stores, just so I would have somewhere to go.”* She eventually decided to take *“a lot of Norwegian classes.”* Although she would later be eligible to receive *“free classes through the municipality,”* she and her husband decided *“it wasn’t worth waiting”* so they paid *“probably 10 or 15 thousand kroner that first half of a year in Norwegian classes.”* She also spent a lot of time volunteering to help pass the time.

When Charlotte received word that a family member was sick, she returned to the United States for about a year. She explains that her *“visa during that time was taken back,”* despite

having been told that it “*wouldn't happen.*” Throughout the process she had been in communication with UDI (Utlendingsdirektoratet, Norway’s directorate of Immigration) and she obtained a “*note from [her] doctor which was like explaining everything.*” She explains that at that she is “*actually still awaiting*” as she “*should be eligible for citizenship and permanent residency*” but because of the time she spent back in the States “*everything has been a huge hassle.*” She explains, “*They restored my clock at zero, so I won't be eligible for these things until next year.*”

5.4.2 Vulnerabilities of Immigrants

Some of the informants discussed the ways in which immigrants and foreigners can be vulnerable when they lack the rights of a citizen. Adam discusses the challenges he and his ex- girlfriend had when he first arrived in Norway. Because they lacked the needed documentation for him to come to Norway on a “*family visa*” as they “*didn't qualify yet, because I think in order to go immediately to the family visa you have to be either engaged or married or be together a minimum of two or three years or something.*” Thus, Adam came to Norway with the intent of receiving a skilled worker visa. He mentions that he “*witnessed an American who had a child, but was still kicked out of the country because his girlfriend didn't earn enough. So in that sense it was very difficult.*” Adam who is no longer with his ex-girlfriend, remains in Norway with an added pressure of maintaining his visa so as to be near his child.

Eliana describes the stress she felt being dependent on her husband’s work for her residency status. Describing how when they applied for the first residency visa, they did not take her income into account. Eliana recounts, “*They only want to see a copy of my husband’s bank, his tax records, his income, his contract, and that he has a lease.*” She makes the comparison to a work-based visa by explaining, “*If I was here on a work visa, I could prove my own income, but I am not.*” She continues, “*Luckily he made above the quota no matter what,*” however, she described that this situation was an “*extra stress at the beginning of our relationship, where he couldn't lose his job, he couldn't go on welfare, because he was responsible for supporting both of [them].*” This meant that for the first three years that they were in Norway it was imperative that he remain employed.

She described how when she got a position in a school program in Oslo, he could not just “quit his job in Sagadalen and move to Oslo and hope to find a new one. He had to always have a job.” According to his contract, he needed to continue working for three months at previous employment after giving notice. However, her master’s program would begin the next month. Eliana explained what happened when she called UDI about the situation, “I was like: ‘oh is it ok if I just go to Oslo a little bit and my husband comes after?’ and they were like: ‘no, you are going to lose your family permit if you don’t sleep in the same house basically.’” After some discussion, she did eventually get permission to spend “two to three nights a week for up to I think like seven to eight weeks apart from him, and that was ok, but any longer than that wasn’t.” Thus, the first two to three months she is studying in Oslo, she has to commute back and forth to school each week. She explains that all of her “classmates are going through Fadderuke (orientation week) and getting to know each other” while she would “fly down, first flight on Monday and sleep in [her] tiny apartment in Oslo.” Eliana would “would sleep there Monday night, Tuesday night, [she] would finish class four o’clock on Wednesday and was on a plane by like 5:30. And [she] did that for like six weeks.” She explains that she “spent like all of the student loans [she] was getting on plane tickets back and forth” but she remained “Folkeregistrert (officially registered)” with her husband and was thus able to comply with UDI’s requirements.

5.4.3 A Change in Status

A primary factor impacting the way that informants see themselves is their perceived status. Several of the informants discuss a downward shift in financial standing, if only for a period of time after moving to Norway. Many of them struggled to realign their financial and social standing to their previously defined identities.

Adriana discusses a sense of embarrassment about her financial position during her time as an au pair. She describes one experience she had when she was on an outing with one of the three children she took care of. Adriana took “the oldest girl,” who at the time was ten years old, and her cousin “out shopping, and she had like a crisp 1,000 kroner bill.” She explains that at the time she had “basically no money.” She recalls, “I was like dying of thirst but I forgot to bring water with me, and these two little girls are buying all this junk, and I am here like- I have no money. And it was just like my lowest point ever.” In another story, she

describes, *"I found 100 kr on this street. And I was so happy, but at the same time I felt embarrassed, because I had never experienced this where like I don't have money."* Not only was this experience embarrassing for her, but it also did not align with how she saw herself.

Similarly, when David arrived in Norway, he spent over three years without a job in Norway. He did *"continue [his] programming job at the University (in the United States), but on a very limited scale. Like 1-10 hours a month."* He remarked that he felt *"not productive"* in that time. He described how those four years of underemployment were: *"challenging. I had to get through with my wife and make ends meet on our limited income."* As David's wife is disabled, they had to live off her limited disability income and the small amount he brought in with his long-distance job in the United States. He later mentions that it was hard not being able to afford to, *"Go on vacation. That is a national pastime here."* Not being able to afford to go on vacation made his, *"wife feel bad which then bounces down to [him]."* He recognized that it was important to her, and he felt bad that he could not provide that for her.

Some of the informants who have not yet been able to find work at a similar level to what they did previously, noticed the constraints of earning less money. Victoria speaks at length about the change in status she experienced as a result of moving and working in Norway. Prior to the move she was *"working full time"* and her and her husband's *"lifestyle was very, very good."* She expounds, *"We owned a home. We owned two cars, and uh and I think our take home income the last two years we lived in the States was like 250,000. So we had a really good lifestyle."* She further explains that she was an *"extremely ambitious, successful, respected, woman in [her] career."* She was proud of the life that she had built for herself, and *"was really involved in the community."* Her husband was *"on the board for an art gallery"* and she was *"on the board for a private school."* They *"gave to charity"* and *"were involved in politics."* She describes that they *"were very involved socially and very involved in the arts. Very happy, successful driven people."* She senses a *"huge loss"* when it comes to *"who she was."* She explains that her involvement in the *"art world and politics"* as well as the broader community made her *"feel very strong and confident."* The loss she feels is not only financial but a much broader *"part of her identity."* She explains that she doesn't *"have any of that [in Norway] ... it's like night and day."*

Although several of the informants have described that they might have struggled to find work in the beginning, they have arrived at a point where their finances have surpassed what

they were or would be in the States. Peter thinks that financially, he is better off in Norway. He states, *“I earn more money than I did- not by much, but then the last job that I was in, and I was pretty high in that job.”* He has able to work his way up to a leadership position and finds that he makes more money in Norway than he did in the United States. Adriana, who struggled financially when working as an au pair, has moved into a social work position in which she earns more than she would in the same field the United States. She is *“much better financially off than [she] was in the States, or ever would be in the States.”*

Isabel similarly states that if she was living in the United States, *“I wouldn't be making as much money as I am making here. I would be far less financially stable.”* In her case, this is because she would have pursued work in education. She explains that *“I can see the struggle it can be to an adjunct faculty in America- and how there is, its not a stepping stone, it is settling. Most of my colleagues back in the states have settled for positions where they will never make more than they would if they were working at a McDonalds or in a unskilled position.”* She states, *“I never pursued a career path because of money”* and that people who go into that field, *“They are doing it because they love the work. But there is no health insurance, there is no security or anything like that. Here I think that because of the security net, I can just be happy with what I do.”* Overall, several informants have described a positive experience with the Norwegian *“security net.”* Some of the informants expressed this being a major factor in their decision to remain in Norway, which will be discussed further in the sections: *“A Shift in Priorities”* and *“Values: A meaningful Career.”*

5.4.4 Finances in Norway

A further aspect of financial life and status is that of day to day independence and access to financial resources. Adam expresses the frustrations he encountered with the bank card system, *“They give you a little debit card without the picture and without all the numbers so you can't do online shopping.”* This picture is additionally used as a form of identification- the kind of card that he received was limited to in-store purchases. He continues, *“It is... like they treat you like a child who shouldn't use their bank card too often or whatnot. A 29-year-old male and whatnot and you are only given a debit card to use and, which means you can't even do shopping online or do anything online- to pay for your visa fee online.”* He asked the bank why this is, to which: *“they don't give any definitive answer to why, they just say, ‘Yeah it's the law’.”* He mentions that *“every now and again you hear about someone getting one,*

and it just depends on the bank.” He has complained to the bank multiple times “about not being able to get a bank card and how difficult that made life here.”

The difference in how joint banking works in the United States and in Norway is also frustrating for a few of the informants. Particularly because it took months for some of the informants to receive a bank account. Victoria explains, *“You have to have your own account; you can’t do joint accounts. And you can’t have your salary put into your spouse’s account.”* This led to her being delayed in receiving her first paycheck because she had not yet gotten her bank account. Victoria states, *“Something in my paperwork hadn’t been approved yet, and it took a while.”*

Eliana explains a cultural difference in the ways in which couples deal with their finances: *“I know it is very Norwegian for couples to have two bank accounts- and like ‘you pay the rent and I buy food’- and that seemed really weird to me.”* She explains why she and her husband do not think in that way *“I know that my husband will always make more money than I do. He is five years older, he has a PhD, and he works in science and tech. And no matter what I do... even though we put in the same amount of hours of work, he happens to be rewarded more financially.”* When it comes to their finances, she explains: *“I have always had the mentality, and he has been totally on board, that it is OUR money. So even when I was here during my undocumented phase and I was not making any money. He never made me feel bad about it.”* She compares her outlook to other people she knows: *“I have friends though who have moved to Norway and kept separate bank accounts who are just depleting their savings while they are looking for work. And I would have been so stressed out if that was me.”* However, it was always important for her to contribute, so as soon as she could, she found a job. *“Part of the kitchenware job was like, I was finally putting money back into the account, instead of just watching it go out... any time my coworker was sick- I would pick up extra shifts. You know, anything I could.”*

Bridget had a similar experience, in part because she did not begin working right away. Prior to moving to Norway, she and her husband *“had a shared checking account and it wasn’t a problem.”* When she first arrived in Norway, Bridget focused on taking language classes, because she had planned to start as a nurse as soon as possible. Thus, she did not have an income for the first year she lived in Norway. She explains her experience with the bank, *“They were sort of suggesting. ‘Are you sure you don’t want your own bank account?’ ... I*

was like, 'Well I don't have a job, I have no money and yeah, we are fine having a shared account.'" The idea seemed unreasonable to them. She describes how "even now it's not even really shared, it's sort of like I am second on the account. I don't know. Like I have... I have access to his account." Not having direct access to the finances creates a sense that the money her husband makes is not THEIR money. This underlines Bridget's sense of dependence on her husband, which she touches on several times throughout the interview.

5.4.5 Shift in priorities

Many of the informants have made a shift in their priorities in order to maintain a positive outlook on their choice to live in Norway. Some discuss putting focus on the aspects of living in Norway which are particularly beneficial for them and their families. The informants connect their choice of living in Norway to: a higher standard of living, better worker rights, free education, a safety net for instances of disability and unemployment, better work- life balance, and family policies which support maternity leave and childcare, allowing parents to maintain career momentum when starting a family.

Adriana contemplates the pros and cons of living and working in Norway compared to the United States. When it comes to "pay and rights as a worker," she thinks, "It's a lot better here." At this point she believes that these factors are "a big motivation for [her] not to leave Norway." She goes on, "Like if you get sick here, I don't have to worry I can get sick leave and all of that" and "the pay is a lot more, so that is a big motivation for me here." She does recognize that when it comes to her career, "Maybe there is more opportunities in the US," simply because Norway "is a lot smaller," but she does state that she is "doing what [she wants] to do." She also mentions that she has "given up being close to [her] family to be here and it is more for [her] husband" that she is here. She explains, "If I was not with my husband- I don't think that I would enjoy living here because I still feel like my network isn't as rooted here." She then returns to the same thought, "One thing that would definitely hold me here is that job, the rights as a worker are so much better here and the pay is a lot better here."

Eliana discusses her priorities at great length. She recently had an experience in which she was at her doctor's office, who happens to be American. The doctor said to her, "Oh your husband is Norwegian. You are stuck". To this she responded, "No, I am not stuck- I am

choosing, it is an active choice for me to be here.” Eliana tries to look at the good that has come from her move. For example, *“A free master’s degree,”* she admits it might not have been the best degree, but she *“didn’t pay anything and so if you think about the cost- benefit,”* it was worth it for her. She expounds on the experience of getting a degree in Norway, *“It wasn’t even that I didn’t pay anything- I got paid in loans and grants from the government to do it.”* She also mentions, *“I love the vacation and I love the work-life balance.”* She explains that perhaps she will move back to the United States eventually, but that she and her husband will remain in Norway *“at least until [they] are finished having kids because the maternity leave and the barnehage daycare system is so much better here than in the US.”* Throughout the interview, she recons with the challenges she faces and that some of her professional goals might be unachievable in Norway with the challenges she faces. She does admit that it is *“a sacrifice,”* and states, *“The reason we would stay here is not because of what I do for work, but sort of in spite of what I do for work.”* She may have given up the hope of having her dream career, *“But then you get the maternity leave and the daycare and the sick days with your kid. All that stuff and that is why we would stay here longer.”* She tries to focus her attention on the fact that this was her choice, and this perspective is, *“kind of how [she gets] by.”*

Victoria discusses one of the primary reasons she and her husband moved to Norway, was that they wanted to start a family. Victoria explains, *“The one factor that would have deterred me from continuing with my career- keep going up and up. Would have been having children. I would not have been able to uh do what I do as a personal chef, um and have children in the US.”* She was aware that if she came to Norway, that *“at least [she] could keep working in [her] field and have a child and go back to working in the field.”* She explains that although she has struggled, she *“still [loves] living here because there are a lot of positives,”* Yet, she does *“go through waves of missing home and missing [her] culture, [her] lifestyle, and the ease of work.”* However, for Victoria, she feels positive about the move, as she states, *“We have been able to achieve our goal of starting a family and me still having the ability to... have a career... and quality of life.”* She defines this quality of life as: *“the slower pace, the more peace, the more stability with our government and being taken care of. There is no fear. If we get sick or in an accident, or our house burns down, or one of us loses our job- we know we will be taken care of and supported, so there is a lot of contentment and peace in our lifestyle here which we... didn’t have that in the US.”*

Peter discusses many of the same themes. He has found that for him, he has more “opportunities” in Norway and believes that “they take the workforce seriously here.” He explains that he came from a “right to work state... essentially what right to work means is the right to fire.” The first job that he found after coming to Norway was in the oil industry, and when the oil crisis hit Norway, he was laid off. The “safety net here kept [him] afloat until (he) got another one,” which took a few months. They “don't really pay a whole lot on unemployment... but it was enough to pay for my rent and buy food.” He makes a comparison to the United States saying, “Where I am from unemployment will not pay for food for a family of 4. You know- it is just... it is a joke, it is not even a safety net, it is a joke.” Beyond the greater opportunities and job security he experiences, he generally feels that he likes “being- I guess an immigrant- I like it. It... I have this thing- I have always been this way I guess, I like being unique... and being an immigrant is the way to do that.”

Bridget agrees that “there are a lot of really good things going on here... There is so much to weigh, and I feel like when you are here you are like: ‘the grass is greener over there,’ but I know that is not really how it is.” She has gotten to the point that she is happy that she went through “the daycare years with our kids in Norway. That our kids have had like a fantastic experience and that it is affordable. And is quality.” She also values the schools, “They are not super challenging, but... my daughter has no homework. They are relaxed, she has fun, and she learns but she is not being taught to pass a test, and she isn't stressed because she has hours of homework when she is ten.” Bridget looks to the United States and appreciates that her daughter “can walk to school” and that she has “no fear that someone is going to walk into her school with a gun. They are not practicing gun drills in her school – and [Bridget's] friends' kids are in the US”, which she thinks that “is sickening.” The longer she lives in Norway the more she finds that her “values are following in line” with the culture although “they always have been there.” At the same time, she feels it is “hard to turn your back on your country, your homeland. I feel like I am sort of giving up on the United States and I don't like that feeling either.”

5.4.6 Values: A Meaningful Career

Several of the informants discuss an evolution in their values, particularly when it comes to what they look for in a career. For example, Adam had spent the first year in Norway without a legitimate job “doing under the table work for money from Norwegian friends.” Thus,

when he was first was given the authorization to work, he had prioritized income and was willing to do any kind of work that he could find. He found a job working in logistics; however, he eventually left his position because it was so frustrating to work in a field so far from his education and passion. *“When a person doesn't have the job that their background is related to, it is quite... terrible. It can be very irritating and tiring and just not motivating at all.”* He reflects on how his feelings evolved over time. *“In the beginning it didn't affect me that much because I thought I was ok with not working in the humanitarian organizations, but then I realized, no, I am not ok with it. I felt like I was kind of wasting my years by not using my education background and that made me feel sad a lot.”* He went on to say that although he was making decent money in his job, he was not fulfilled: *“I wasn't really using my brain the way I wanted to- and I wanted to get back into the humanitarian world.”* At the time of the interview Adam had quit his job and was looking for a career related job.

Eliana, as discussed previously, misses a challenge and a sense of making a difference. She took the job she has now because it was *“far better than any other offer that [she] had.”* She explains, *“I didn't have any other offers.”* She works in the *“private sector”* and explains, *“this is the first time I have had to work in a job where people are talking about how to make money and I don't care about that. I just want to figure out how I can help schools.”* Although she has work, she wishes that she could have a more meaningful career.

One of Charlotte's biggest priorities is finding a career that is meaningful to her. She explains, *“It is very important to me to have work that I feel passionate about and I don't mean like 'Oh, am so excited to go to work every day'- but I mean like the long term. That slow burn kind of stuff where it aligns with your values.”* She is *“terrified that it is impossible to find”* that kind of work in Norway. Some of her *“high points have definitely been the short periods of time where [she] had complete hope”* to use her *“relevant education or doing things that [she] is passionate about- like using [her] values.”* She spent time working in a non-profit and *“it ended up not working out with their funding.”* She expresses that it *“felt awesome... that was amazing, [she] felt super useful.”* Since then she has applied for similar positions and holds out hope that she will be able to find a job that aligns with her values.

5.4.7 Identity Transformation

The move to Norway has impacted the identity of the informants in varying ways. The majority of the informants reported a sense that they feel more American, although there were two informants who due to their background express never feeling entirely connected to their American identity.

A common notion that was shared among the informants was that they did not heavily identify as American while living in the States, but how that shifted upon their move to Norway. Bridget sums up her experience by saying: *“sometimes moving away makes you realize that you are more... sometimes it strengthens your identity with your home country- that you feel more American in some ways- some of those things get highlighted.”*

Eliana had a similar experience and describes her feelings, *“I don't think I identified as being so American when I was living in the States, but being in Norway I think it is one of the first things that I present myself as to people.”* Later in the interview she reflects, *“...I am more American now. Its funny, because in the US... I would identify with being Jewish, I would identify with having worked abroad or studied abroad- lived abroad. And then now that I am not in America, I like, of course I identify with being American.”* Eliana also emphasizes the importance of her time living abroad. She views herself as an *“American who has lived abroad. Expat. I don't really love that term, but I guess I am one.”* She compares herself to other Americans she has come across. *“There are people whining on the Americans in Norway Facebook group: ‘I just miss you know, Kraft Macaroni and Cheese.’ And I am like ‘I don't really miss that...’ But there are other things I miss.”* Eliana reflects, *“Something that has always resonated with me is that people have many identities and you often identify with the one that feels the most threatened at a given point in time. And so I think in Norway, the American part of me is like the hardest to... Like being a democrat is fine, being a liberal is fine, but American can feel really hard.”*

Isabel shares a similar story. She explained how her mother's family *“identified with that very very Italian- American culture.”* She describes how she *“grew up with all the crazy aunts and uncles and spaghetti and making wine in the basement and speaking Italian and kind of stuff.”* Prior to moving to Norway, she never *“made a big deal out of things like the 4th of July, or Labor Day (American holidays) or any of those kinds of things.”* However, when she moved to Norway, a shifted occurred. She has a sister- in- law who is British and who *“loves American kitsch and stuff like that, and so she kind of encourages”* her to

celebrate “4th of July to the max.” They “put the flags up, decorations.... She dressed her kids up like the Statue of Liberty... flew American flags, um. She made this cake.... Its red white and blue on the inside.” She explains that in the US she “would never like, deck [herself] out in red, white and blue stripes. If anything, [she] would have protested it.” Isabel now embraces her culture in an entirely new way, now that she is no longer there.

The majority of the informants describe maintaining a strong connection to their American identity. However, two informants, Adriana and Peter had slightly different experiences. Adriana reflects on her cultural identity, “I am just a mix of everything.” She describes having grown “up in this sort of Hispanic culture at home.” and also has “family from other countries.” Beyond her cultural background, she spent time living “in Africa” and has “traveled everywhere.” She returns to her initial point: “I am just a mix of - yeah, I don't know. So maybe I have identity issues or something.” Adriana’s Hispanic background as well as her experiences living around the world have led to a sense of confusion when it comes to her cultural identity. When asked what culture she identifies with she responded, “Maybe I don't feel like I am anything a lot of the time.” She explains that when “people start talking about American things,” she is “just kind of put off by it sometimes.” She continues, “So yeah, I am sort of homeless in a way- like in my culture. So I kind of just pick the things I like and not everything.”

Adriana describes a flexible identity, which she falls into based on those who she is around at that time. When she meets an American in Norway, she “can be an American with them” and when she meets “people from Latin America and [she] starts speaking Spanish with them,” she expresses that it all “just depends on who [she] is with” and her “culture changes depending on that.” However, she continues to feel that “at the same time they don’t understand fully”. She explains: “I have several um friends from Latin America- and it is nice to hang out with them and speak Spanish, but I mean I grew up in the States, so there are just some things that we don't get from each other... And with like Americans- or, white Americans, they didn't grow up in an Hispanic home- so we don't match everything.” Since moving to Norway several years ago, she has “picked up a lot of Norwegian things,” so when she returns to the States, she describes herself as “strange there” because she does and says “things that are strange.” For Adriana the move to Norway “makes things more complicated because now [she is] even more clueless as to which culture [she is] or identifies with.” She also describes a shift that has occurred within herself. She States, “When I go back to the

States, I am not the same person I was when I lived there. I have had different experiences and things from this culture now, so it can also be a challenge to go back to the States and relate to people there.”

Peter similarly expresses a lack of integration in American or Norwegian culture. He explains, *“Keep in mind, growing up in a cult, is. Has affected me in ways that are probably not normal for you. For example, I am used to being the outcast and so coming here- and not necessarily integrating- doesn't really bother me. Because I didn't integrate at home ether.”* Throughout the interview, Peter explains how this cult has impacted his ability to fit in in broader society. He never had *“all these people inviting [him] or wanting to hang out.”* *“This is normal”* for him and thus does not bother him. He sums it up: *“I don't feel like I identify with any culture, and I don't think that I ever have to be honest. Probably from being a separatist growing up in a cult, and not having that anymore, I haven't had anything to replace it with.”*

6 Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Discussion

In this section I will discuss the findings of my research, using the theoretical framework as well as additional literature to increase context. This section is also divided into four subsections, which organize the data in a similar manner to that of the results section. However, due to the extensive interconnectivity of integration factors, some themes are addressed in the context of theoretical frameworks and are thus found in a different order. The first section will describe how employment can be a barrier to and mean for integration, as expressed by the informants. The following section describes how the informants link effectors for integration such as language and social connection to their success integrating in Norway. The third section discusses the position of privilege, and at the same time disadvantage, that the informants expressed. The final section addresses identity and status, particularly in the context of the informant's work integration.

6.1.1 Employment as a Mean for Integration

Employment is used as both a marker and a means of integration. Employment levels are often used in to understand how “integrated” an individual is (as a marker). However, employment has also been identified as a means through which an immigrant can gain economic independence, exchange with members of the host society, develop language skills, and build confidence. (Ager & Strang, 2008) This research documented many of the challenges that a group of US- American immigrants faced when it comes to integration into employment in Norway.

Through this research, I identified that many of the informants fell into precarious work, at least for a time. Several informants expressed that although they actively tried to find work which aligned with their previous work experience with a full-time contract, they did not manage to find such work, particularly in the first few years they lived in Norway. However, several informants did find a permanent contract later in their time living in Norway. This lines up with statistics from SSB about the immigrant workforce in Norway, which show that the longer an immigrant from the United States lives in Norway, the more likely they are to have a full-time position. (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019c) However, there is also the possibility that those who do not manage to find fulfilling work and integrate in Norway, return to the United States.

A study on temporary staffing in Norway showed that in contrast to Norwegian workers who use temporary positions as a springboard to full- time contracted employment, immigrants are more likely to stay in such positions for an extended period of time. Such positions often lack the worker protection that contracted positions provide. (Friberg, 2016) The informants in my research connected their short- term contracted or substitute positions to feelings of uncertainty. For example, not knowing which days of the week they will be working, or if they will have a job next week or next month. Precarious positions stand in the way of immigrants planning for the future, feeling settled, or gaining a sense of belonging. (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bloch, 1999) Thus work integration, or the lack thereof, can have significant impact on individuals lives.

A further factor of work integration is the extent of recognition for the human capital that an immigrant brings into their host country. (Spencer & Charsley, 2016) One barrier that recent immigrant face is that of non-recognition of their work experience and credentials. (Houle & Yssaad, 2010) The informants in this project had mixed experiences with regard to the

acceptance of their qualifications. The informants indicated that some industries require more accreditation or authorization than others, which is consistent with the literature. (Zietsma, 2010)

Although some of the informants managed to find employment which did not require any official accreditation of their degrees, others got caught up in a long-term struggle to receive accreditation. Bridget discussed the several- year process she went through to be able to work as a nurse. She continues not to be able to work as a midwife, a field where she had many years of experience and a higher certification (master's degree) than what is needed for midwives in Norway. With Norway's shortage of nursing personnel, it is detrimental to society that individuals with sufficient qualifications get caught up in multi-year struggles for accreditation. (Kalstø, 2019) In Eliana's case, the decision not to recognize her previous experience of teaching English as a qualification for a pedagogy program caused her to give up on that goal of becoming a teacher in Norway. These informants' experiences illustrate that the non-recognition of qualifications has been a barrier to their work integration.

In the interim, the majority of the informants discussed a period of unemployment or working in employment for which they are significantly overqualified. This mismatch between education and employment is common among recent immigrants with university- level education. (Gilmore & Gilmore, 2009) Informants identified the non- recognition of skills and qualifications, lack of language skills, and other factors which stood in their way of acquiring work that matches their experience and education. This led to informants working in jobs that they were overqualified for. Furthermore, some described being unemployed or working only part- time, when they desired full- time employment.

Informants connect a feeling of shame, embarrassment, and decreased self-confidence to their time being underemployed or unemployed. These results are consistent with findings from a 2001 study describing significant psychological costs to individuals and their families in a period of unemployment, documenting a significant correlation between employment and psychological well-being. (Creed & Macintyre, 2001) As well as research which showed that employment leads to an improved outlook, in contrast to increased levels of depression and loss of self- esteem among the unemployed. (Tiggemann & Winefield, 1984) Similarly, underemployment has been shown to have a negative effect on the health and well-being of employees, although the relationship varies based on the kind of employment. (Friedland &

Price, 2003) This is consistent with Bridget's narrative, in which she describes her frustration with working as a nurse's aide in a nursing home, but finding enjoyment working in a local café, despite the fact that she was not using her education.

Another factor which the informants addressed was the vulnerability that foreign employees can face within the Norwegian workforce. There were varied responses by the informants about the work environments that they had experienced. There were several informants who expressed having an overall positive experience working in Norway, citing stringent Norwegian worker laws as protection against mistreatment. However, other informants discussed their negative experiences. Individuals who spent time working in low-skilled work environments, particularly where there were large populations of immigrants, discussed a decreased adherence to Norwegian worker laws. Although there is limited research on this aspect of vulnerability for immigrant employees in Norway, a disparity between worker laws and actual work conditions has been identified within the agricultural sector. (Rye & Andrzejewska, 2010)

6.1.2 Social Connection, Effectors for Integration and Belonging

Ager and Strang (2008) and as Spenser and Charsley (2016) discuss the importance of social connection as well as factors such as language and cultural knowledge for the adjustment of immigrants. These factors were discussed at great length by informants, both the ways that they stood as a barrier and facilitated their success in finding employment as well as promoting a sense of work satisfaction. Ager and Strang (2008, p.178), explained that many of their informants identified belonging as, "*the ultimate mark of living in an integrated community.*" The informants defined this sense of belonging as including a connection with family, friends, and on a societal scale, respect for each other's values.

Several of the informants described having made friends with other US- American immigrants; among those informants, some described feelings of guilt or shame with the lack of friendships they have been able to build with Norwegians. However, friendships with fellow immigrants have been shown to be vital in decreasing the risk of depression. (Beiser, 1993) On the other hand, forging "social bridges" with members of the host community, are imperative to a sense of belonging in the host country. (Ager & Strang, 2008) Furthermore, research has shown that connections between immigrants and members of the host

community, can assist in acquiring employment. (Woolcock, 1998) This is a struggle that many of the informants continue to face, playing into their sense that they do not feel fully integrated in Norway.

Although informants expressed a desire to find more Norwegian social contacts, many struggled with breaking into Norwegian friend groups. Several informants connected this challenge to a lack of language skills or comfort speaking Norwegian. This aligns with the conclusions of a study on the connection between language proficiency and social integration. The study additionally concluded that cultural knowledge and access to opportunities to interact with native speakers are critical in creating social connections. (Derwing & Waugh, 2012) Some informants described the challenge of finding opportunities to practice the language because the Norwegians they came into contact with were so comfortable speaking English. This aligns with a study on language acquisition of Americans in Norway, which found that increased acculturation (particularly social integration) lead to increased language skills. (Lybeck, 2002) The informants in my research project discussed the ways in which language skills and cultural knowledge dynamics lead to social isolation in their workplaces, particularly those with a majority of Norwegian employees.

Effectors for integration such as language skills and cultural knowledge not only impact an immigrant's ability to make social connections but also stand as a barrier to employment. (Ager & Strang, 2008) The informants had differing Norwegian language skill levels and were thus impacted by this effector to varying extents. Several of the informants discussed their perception that Norwegian language skills are imperative for finding work in their industry of choice. This aligns with a Canadian study, which showed that official language proficiency improves labor-market outcomes among educated immigrants. (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2005) However, four of the informants were eventually able to sidestep this barrier, explaining that they had successfully found employment where the working language was English. Although some of them still experience some level of social isolation at work. A few of the informants have achieved advanced level Norwegian skills, however, they discuss ways in which language remains a barrier to executing tasks at work.

6.1.3 Privileged yet Disadvantaged

The informants for this research project expressed confusion when it came to their classification as immigrants. Not only are the informants in disagreement about the definition of the term immigrant and whether or not it refers to them, but they also discuss being privileged and yet disadvantaged in the employment- seeking process and in their treatment by immigration authorities. Having moved to Norway and attempted to integrate, the majority of the informants have come to recognize themselves as a privileged group among immigrants. They feel it is disingenuous to “complain” about their challenges, appreciating that other immigrants face situations which are far more difficult.

As discussed in Section 1 of this paper, the misuse of the terms “immigrant” and “foreigner” in Norwegian are common. (Dzamzrija, 2008) Informants discuss differencing views on the use of the term immigrant, particularly its’ use in Norwegian. Some informants contest the use of the term on the basis of their uncertainty with regards to remaining in Norway, describing how they dislike the inevitability of it (that they would stay in Norway forever). Others talk about ways in which the term is negatively charged, a topic which has also been documented in the literature. (T. G. Eriksen & Bolstad, 2014; Hagelund, 2010) Finally, there were those among my informants who identify as immigrants and remain convinced that the term does refer to them, even though those around them insinuate otherwise.

Similarly confusing to the informants, was a sense of being both privileged as an immigrant in Norway and yet disadvantaged living in Norwegian society. Several of the informants described being able to “pass” as a Norwegian, when walking down the street, no one would think that they are not Norwegian. Spenser and Charsley (2008) identify discrimination to be an additional barrier to integration, and those who are noticeably of another ethnicity discussed the ways in which their appearance factored into their treatment in Norway. For example, Adriana discussed frequently being asked where she comes from, she connected these questions to and a sense of discomfort and that she does not belong.

When it came to obtaining employment, informants described ways in which they are privileged in the job seeking process, as well as ways in which they are discriminated against. US- American immigrants are more likely to end up in a full- time position (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019c), and less likely to be unemployed than other immigrant groups in Norway. (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019a) The informants expressed recognition for this fact. However, there are ways which US- Americans can be discriminated against in the job seeking process,

outside of factors such as language and acceptance of qualifications. Isabel expressed a hunch that she was not receiving callbacks on employment applications due to her Slavic-sounding last name. This would be consistent with findings from a Norwegian study, demonstrating discrimination by employers to applications with the same qualifications but differing last names (Pakistani vs. Norwegian-sounding names). (Birkelund, Rogstad, Heggebø, Aspøy, & Bjelland, 2014)

Another factor standing as a barrier to obtaining work in Norway is the paradox of being simultaneously overqualified and yet underqualified. Immigrant workers are more likely to be overqualified for their work than a country's natives. (Quintini, 2011) However, barriers such as language skills and acceptance of qualifications can impede labor integration. The informants expressed, on the one hand, being underqualified for the positions they were applying for, primarily for a lack of language skills and in some cases, because they lacked the recognition of their education or previous work experience. On the other hand, they were overqualified for the positions they were left to apply for, having years of experience and degrees which in theory qualify them for more specialized careers. For example, David, who had two decades of experience working in IT, struggled to find employment in his field due to language and living in a smaller city. However, when applying for work at a local grocery store, the employer would not hire him because he was "overqualified."

Furthermore, informants discussed a sense of falling between the cracks of Norway's immigration policy, particularly when they are struggling to find work. For example, Eliana described the difficulty she has faced trying to obtain employment in the public sector working with education policy, a goal that she has. She described her frustration when she realized that public offices have a policy of inviting at least one person who has "immigration background," or whose parents are immigrants to an interview (as long as they are qualified), but that this policy does not include Americans (or EU members). Eliana perceives this policy which aims to increase "*diverse perspectives*" and give a chance to minority groups in Norway, (Statens personhåndbok, 2019) as discriminatory in a different way. She explains that although she knows she is privileged as an immigrant, she feels that she will continue to be locked out of the kind of employment which would be the most fulfilling for her.

6.1.4 Identity and Status

Among the domains of integration that Spencer and Charsley (2016) identified, is that of identity. Within the context of integration, identity is “*the process that enables individuals, notwithstanding differing cultural backgrounds, beliefs and identities, to feel at some level that they can identify with the neighborhood or country in which, and people among whom they are living.*” (Spencer, 2011, p.203) A loss of economic and social status is a significant factor in this equation.

The major cause of the downward mobility for immigrants is based on the inability for these individuals to continue working in their previous occupations. A loss of economic status often leads to a decreased standard of living and social status. (Gans, 2009) This shift has been shown to lead to a sense of demoralization and depression. (Nicklett & Burgard, 2009) Additionally, some immigrants report a sense of degradation associated with their immigrant status. (Remennick, 1999) Thus, it is not surprising that immigrants often struggle to identify with their host communities. The informants in this research project discussed a loss in status, shift in gender roles, as well as described their struggle to define their own cultural identity. In addition, some of the informants discussed vulnerabilities that they faced, due to the lack of rights they have faced living in Norway without citizenship or legal status.

Several of the informants expressed facing a reckoning, when their plan and envisioned future did not align with the reality in which that they found themselves. Some discussed a career trajectory that they had been on previous to their move to Norway, and the challenge they faced to regain their previous career momentum. Both Eliana and Charlotte linked a sense of loss to believing they would find work which aligned with their values or would have an impact. Informants who had previously linked their career success to their identity were often left with a decreased sense of self- confidence.

Although many of the informants discuss having come to a point where their income and quality of life have surpassed that which they had or were on track to have in the United States, my research showed that at least for a time, several informants struggled with a perceived loss of status. Some informants discussed periods of time where they struggled to have the income to cover their basic needs. Others discussed the challenge of being unable to provide for their families to the extent that they wish. Furthermore, informants connected a sense of mismatch between their identity and their status in Norway (in the form of decreased economic and social capital).

When it comes to cultural identity, that majority of the informants discussed feeling more “American” since moving to Norway, despite the fact that prior to their move, they did not necessarily notice this identity. There are various ways in which immigrants deal with the incongruence between their own and their host culture. This mismatch between cultures can push immigrants to increase their identification with their own group, rather than accepting their new environment as their own. Maintaining identification with one’s background increases self-esteem, a predictor for psychological well-being. (Nesdale & Mak, 2003) However, this is not always the case. Two of my informants discussed the ways in which they never felt fully integrated into the United States, and that now more than ever, they do not feel they “fit in” anywhere.

Finally, informants discussed the issue of rights and legal status, and its’ effect on their lives in Norway. The majority of informants came to or stayed in Norway on a family visa. They discussed the circumstances and challenges with bureaucracy they faced. The informants described long waits, and a lack of rights and access to services before their paperwork had been processed. Furthermore, bureaucratic hurdles in the process of gaining recognition for their employment skills stood as a barrier to finding fulfilling work. (Kalleberg, 2009) One of the informants discussed working informally out of necessity to pay for his needs. Another informant described not having access to health care she needed before she obtained legal status. The lack of rights that foreign citizens face can stand as a significant barrier to integration. (Spencer & Charsley, 2016)

6.2 Conclusion

The aim of this project was to increase understanding of the integration process, specifically the aspect of labor integration, through the narratives of a group of informants who immigrated from the United States to Norway within the last ten years. The informants addressed a variety of factors which aided or were barriers against their integration including employment, education, language, cultural knowledge, social contacts, discrimination, etc. These factors align greatly with the previously identified factors of integration and Ager and Strang (2008) and effectors for integration by Spenser and Charsley (2008).

I collected narratives from informants describing how their immigrant status impacted their ability to find fulfilling employment and how their experience in Norway changed their lives. Through this research, I determined that this group of immigrants experienced many of the same barriers as other groups of immigrants, particularly in the first years. I found that there are structural and policy barriers standing in the way of the acceptance of previously acquired qualifications for these informants. I also discovered that over time, the informants generally acquired fulfilling employment and achieved a sense of integration and belonging in Norway. This research identifies areas of interest for future research, including the gendered impact of US-American integration, and evaluations of family immigration policy, and measures for increased transparency and ease in the acceptance of foreign qualifications.

Spenser and Charsley (2016) identified the highly interrelated nature of the effectors of integration. In my research, I found this to be accurate. This research addressed the interconnectivity of these effectors on immigration, and their influence on the informant's sense of confidence and belonging. Furthermore, the informants commonly linked their self-confidence to factors such as social and economic status, language and employment. As these increased, the informants expressed an increase in their sense of belonging in Norway.

Moreover, I documented the ways in which the immigration experience affected the informant's identity. On the one hand, the informants describe an increased connection with their American background, however, the integration experience also increased their sense of comradery with other immigrants. Additionally, I discovered a shift in values for this group of informants. Although they discussed many of the challenges they had faced in their integration processes, they connected their desire to stay in Norway to better worker rights, free education, a safety net for instances of illness and unemployment, increased standard of living and work- life balance, and family policies which support them as working parents.

This increase in knowledge contributes to a broader understanding of the social, economic, and emotional impact of immigration for a group of individuals moving from the United States to Norway in adulthood.

7 References:

- Adamuti-Trache, M., & Sweet, R. (2005). Exploring the relationship between educational credentials and the earnings of immigrants. *Canadian Studies in Population [ARCHIVES]*, 32(2), 177-201.
- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of refugee studies*, 21(2), 166-191.
- Arbeidstilsynet. (2019). Arbeidsforhold. Retrieved from <https://www.arbeidstilsynet.no>
- Avant, G. R., & Knutsen, K. P. (1993). UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: Janteloven and Social Conformity in Norway. *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 50(4), 449-460.
- Beiser, M. (1993). After the door has been opened: The mental health of immigrants and refugees in Canada *The International Refugee Crisis* (pp. 213-227): Springer.
- Birkelund, G. E., Rogstad, J., Heggebø, K., Aspøy, T. M., & Bjelland, H. F. (2014). Diskriminering i arbeidslivet-Resultater fra randomiserte felteksperiment i Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen og Trondheim. *Sosiologisk tidsskrift*, 22(04), 352-382.
- Bloch, A. (1999). Refugees in the job market: a case of unused skills in the British economy *Refugees, citizenship and social policy in Europe* (pp. 187-210): Springer.
- Bratsberg, B., Raaum, O., & Røed, K. (2016). Labor market integration of refugees in Norway. *Refugees and Economic Migrants: Facts, Policies and Challenges*, 37-52.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Creed, P. A., & Macintyre, S. R. (2001). The relative effects of deprivation of the latent and manifest benefits of employment on the well-being of unemployed people. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 6(4), 324.
- Derwing, T. M., & Waugh, E. (2012). Language skills and the social integration of Canada's adult immigrants. *IRPP study*(31), 1.
- Dzamarija, M. T. (2014). Oversikt over personer med ulik grad av innvandringsbakgrunn. *Statistics Norway, Oslo*.
- Dzamzrija, M. T. (2008). Hva skal «innvandreren» hete? *Samfunnsspeilet*, 2008/4. Retrieved from <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/hva-skal-innvandreren-hete>
- Eriksen, T. G., & Bolstad, E. (2014). NRKs flerkulturelle ordliste. Retrieved from <http://fido.nrk.no/22d22e5cb682284d0e8f7cb5b5f5addd3aad59fc3c4765bb807b7de9c13a9c2d/svartelista%20a5%20bokmål.pdf>
- Eriksen, T. H. (2013). Immigration and national identity in Norway. *Oslo: UiO*.
- Favell, A. (2010). Integration and nations: the nation-state and research on immigrants in Western Europe. *Selected studies in international migration and immigrant incorporation*, 1, 371.
- Friberg, J. H. (2016). The rise and implications of temporary staffing as a migration industry in Norway: De Gruyter.
- Friedland, D. S., & Price, R. H. (2003). Underemployment: Consequences for the health and well-being of workers. *American journal of community psychology*, 32(1-2), 33-45.
- Galloway, T. A. (2006). *The Labor Market Integration of Immigrant Men and Women*. Retrieved from
- Gans, H. J. (2009). First generation decline: downward mobility among refugees and immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 32(9), 1658-1670.
- Gilmore, J., & Gilmore, J. (2009). *The 2008 Canadian immigrant labour market: analysis of quality of employment*: Statistics Canada Ottawa, Canada.

- Godøy, A. (2017). Local labor markets and earnings of refugee immigrants. *Empirical Economics*, 52(1), 31-58.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2009). *Analyzing narrative reality*: Sage.
- Guttu, T. (Ed.) (2005) Norsk Ordbok med 1000 illustrasjoner (2nd ed.). Oslo, Norway: Kunnskapsforlaget Aschehoug og Gyldendal.
- Hagelund, A. (2010). Dealing with the Dilemmas: Integration at the Street-level in Norway. *International Migration*, 48(2), 79-102.
- Hornby, A. S. (Ed.) (2015) Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (9th ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Houle, R., & Yssaad, L. (2010). Recognition of newcomers' foreign credentials and work experience. *Perspectives on labour and income*, 22(4), 18.
- Kalleberg, A. L. (2009). Precarious work, insecure workers: Employment relations in transition. *American sociological review*, 74(1), 1-22.
- Kalstø, A. s. M. (2019). NAVS BEDRIFTSUNDERSØKELSE 2019: Økt etterspørsel etter arbeidskraft. Retrieved from <https://www.nav.no/no/NAV+og+samfunn/Kunnskap/Analyser+fra+NAV/Arbeid+og+velferd/Arbeid+og+velferd/bedriftsundersøkelsen>
- Langfeldt, L., Harvey, L., Huisman, J., Westerheijden, D., & Stensaker, B. (2008). Evaluation of NOKUT—the norwegian agency for quality assurance in education. *Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research*.
- Lassetter, J. H., & Callister, L. C. (2009). The impact of migration on the health of voluntary migrants in western societies: a review of the literature. *Journal of transcultural nursing*, 20(1), 93-104.
- Liebig, T. (2009). Jobs for Immigrants: Labour market integration in Norway. *OECD Social, Employment, and Migration Working Papers*(94), 1.
- Lybeck, K. (2002). Cultural identification and second language pronunciation of Americans in Norway. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86(2), 174-191.
- NAV. (2009). Oppfølging. Retrieved from <https://www.nav.no/no/Person/Arbeid/Oppfølging+og+tiltak+for+a+komme+i+jobb/Tiltak+for+a+komme+i+jobb/Relatert+innhold/oppfølging>
- Nesdale, D., & Mak, A. S. (2003). Ethnic identification, self-esteem and immigrant psychological health. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(1), 23-40.
- Nicklett, E. J., & Burgard, S. A. (2009). Downward social mobility and major depressive episodes among Latino and Asian-American immigrants to the United States. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 170(6), 793-801.
- Niemi, E. (2001). Om politikk og kategorien «innvandrere». *forutsetning i det storstilte salgfsfisket i høy-og seinmiddelalderen, rettet mot det europeiske markedet. Også for kvenene framsto Nord-Norge som løfterikt, og spesielt Nord-Troms og*, 52.
- Olsen, K. M., & Kalleberg, A. L. (2004). Non-standard work in two different employment regimes: Norway and the United States. *Work, employment and society*, 18(2), 321-348.
- Quintini, G. (2011). Over-qualified or under-skilled.
- Remennick, L. I. (1999). 'Women with a Russian Accent' in Israel. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 6(4), 441-461.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis* (Vol. 30): Sage.
- Risjord, M. (2014). *Philosophy of Social Science : A Contemporary Introduction*. Hoboken: Routledge.
- Robinson, V. (1998). *Defining and measuring successful refugee integration*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of ECRE International conference on Integration of Refugees in Europe.

- Rye, J. F., & Andrzejewska, J. (2010). The structural disempowerment of Eastern European migrant farm workers in Norwegian agriculture. *Journal of rural studies*, 26(1), 41-51.
- Semningsen, I. (1960). Norwegian emigration in the nineteenth century. *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 8(2), 150-160.
- Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*: SAGE publications limited.
- Spencer, S. (2011). *The migration debate*: Policy Press.
- Spencer, S., & Charsley, K. (2016). Conceptualising integration: a framework for empirical research, taking marriage migration as a case study. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 4(1), 18.
- Statens personalhåndbok. (2019). *En personalpolitikk for å styrke inkludering og mangfold*. Retrieved from https://lovdata.no/dokument/SPH/sph-2019/KAPITTEL_1-6#KAPITTEL_1-6.
- Statistisk sentralbyrå. (2018). Immigrants by reason for immigration. <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/07113/>
- Statistisk sentralbyrå. (2019a). Arbeidskraftundersøkelse. <https://www.ssb.no/statbank/table/10589/>
- Statistisk sentralbyrå. (2019b). Employed persons by country background, sex, age, contents and year. <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/09837>
- Statistisk sentralbyrå. (2019c). Employment among immigrants, register-based. <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/12553/>
- Statistisk sentralbyrå. (2019d). Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents. <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvbef/aar>
- Tiggemann, M., & Winefield, A. H. (1984). The effects of unemployment on the mood, self-esteem, locus of control, and depressive affect of school-leavers. *Journal of occupational Psychology*, 57(1), 33-42.
- Whorf, B. L. (1997). The relation of habitual thought and behavior to language *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 443-463): Springer.
- Woolcock, M. (1998). Social capital and economic development: Toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework. *Theory and society*, 27(2), 151-208.
- Zietsma, D. (2010). Immigrants working in regulated occupations. *Population*, 1(1,207.2), 208.207.

8 Appendix:

8.1 Interview Guide

Demographic questions:

1. Birth year and place
2. Relationship status:
 - a. Single (includes divorced/widowed- indicate if that is the case)
 - b. Partner (not co-resident)
 - c. Partner (co-resident)
 - d. Married
3. Number of children at home (if applicable)
4. Number of children living outside home
5. Presence of family members in same town:
 - a. Siblings
 - b. Parents
 - c. Children
6. How long they have lived in your current house/apt/place
7. How many times they have moved in the past three years (note on timeline)
8. Level of education obtained
9. When did you arrive in Norway?

Background:

- Where are you from? What did your parents do for work? How would you categorize your family's socioeconomic status while you were growing up?
- Did you belong to/identify with specific groups (now or prior to your move to Norway? Has that changed?)
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Culture
 - Religion
 - political
- What is your academic/professional background?
 - Where and what did you study?
 - What kind of work did you do before moving to Norway?
- Describe your life status before you moved to Norway (married/single, kids, job/schooling, well-being/ life satisfaction).
- How satisfied were you with the last job you had in the States? Scale 1-10
- What brought you to Norway? (family, love, work, travel, etc.)
- Had you been in Norway before?
 - What was your image about Norway before you moved?
 - Retrospectively, what do they think you were wrong/right about?
- How would you describe who you were before the move? Who did you think you would become?
 - Retrospectively, do you think that you have changed? How so?

Norway: (add relevant details to timeline)

- How would you describe your first year in Norway in general terms?
 - Did you encounter problems with bureaucracy: (dealing with official problems- getting a bank account, visa problems, registration challenges, etc.)? (record on timeline)
 - How was your social adjustment? When did you start making friends? (record on timeline)
 - How would you describe your psychological well-being in the first months? (record on timeline)
 - Were there any significant changes in your well-being in the time you have been here? Can you attribute them to anything in particular?
- Are there any major life changes which have occurred since living in Norway? (record on timeline)
- What is your primary source of social interactions outside of home? Do you feel that you have friends at work?
- How would you describe your experiences socializing with Norwegians?

Language:

- Do you speak Norwegian? Do you know what level?

Yes:

- When did you start learning the language?
- Were you highly motivated to learn the language?
- Do you feel it has been a challenge learning the language/ getting enough practice?
- Do you use your language skills at work?
- Do you have Norwegian friends? If so, do you communicate in English, Norwegian or a mix?

No:

- Do you want to/plan to learn the language?
- Do you have Norwegian friends? / Do you work with Norwegians? - Do you feel socially isolated in groups of Norwegians?
- Do you understand/are you able to communicate in Norwegian to some extent?
- Do you feel that learning the language has been a priority?
- Do you think it is important to learn Norwegian for work?
- Is it important to learn Norwegian socially?

Work:

- What was your experience of trying to find work like?
 - Was it difficult to find a job? If so, what was the emotional effect of those challenges?
 - Did you experience any problems having your education or previous work experience accepted as qualifications in Norway?
 - How did you find your first job?
 - Are you still working at that job? – if not: What do you do now? / How did you find that job?

- How is your work environment? Do you feel empowered to talk openly about issues at work?
 - Do you know your rights as a worker in Norway? Have you ever felt exploited in your work environment? Do you think your background sets you up to be mistreated? (If so, what part?- race, nationality, just being foreign?)
 - As a non- Norwegian, do you put up with things that Norwegians would not? If so, why?
 - Are you doing the kind of work you want to do?
 - Are you satisfied with your current job? Scale 1-10. Are there particular aspects that if changed, would make you more satisfied?
 - How do you feel about where you are now, compared to where you were at in the US professionally (& trajectory you were on)?
 - Why do you think it's different/ problematic/ challenging?
 - What are your professional goals/plans? Have they changed since moving to Norway?
-
- Do you feel like your cultural identity has shifted since moving Norway?
 - Do you feel respected in Norwegian society? At work?
 - Are you treated differently than other immigrants?
 - Would you define yourself as an immigrant?
 - Do you plan to stay in Norway? Why/why not?
 - Have you noticed a difference in your level of confidence since moving to Norway?
 - Has the move to Norway effected your identity (how you define yourself)? How has it changed?
 - Do you feel that your status (position relative to others in your community) has changed since moving to Norway- if so, how?