



Welcome to the party: Immigrant's experiences in political parties in Norway.

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Abstract

In Norway, like in the rest of Europe and the Western liberal democracies, immigration is a contentious issue of social, political, cultural, and economic discussions. Social and economic integration has been the main focus of the government. Political participation of immigrants on the other hand took years to be a center of focus for government policy, practitioners, and researchers alike. Whereas the role of political parties in the poor participation of immigrants has been understudied.

This study investigates the experiences of immigrants with refugee backgrounds in political parties through an intercultural perspective. The qualitative study is primarily based on 13 interviews of both native and immigrant members of two political parties in Norway (Sosialistisk Venstreparti - SV and Arbeiderpartiet-AP). The thesis presents the pathways of the few immigrants that are in political parties, role of networks in enabling them to find their way into political parties. Likewise, the study identified that those immigrant party members mostly use their sense of agency to be active in political parties. The political parties are weak in recruiting immigrant members which is partly due to a lack of overlapping networks between natives and immigrants. Interestingly, the few who made it into the parties were welcomed very well and were able to stay for many years as active members.

This study reported that Norwegian language is a main barrier for immigrants' political participation. Those who came as children have a better chance to succeed in party politics than those who came to Norway already as grown-ups. Similarly, this study shows that without having cultural capital, [such as good written and oral political language] immigrants are excluded from party politics. Similarly, the intersection of identities that immigrants embody makes a very complex way of understanding their representation. This places them in a difficult situation balancing between representing immigrants, their supposed constituency ethnic minorities and representing the party. Lastly, this study noted that there was no blatant discrimination inside the parties but immigrant party members experience discrimination from the broader society, especially through digital hate. Inside the parties, not being taken seriously is one important finding, which is a form of subtle discrimination.

Acronyms

AP- Arbeiderpartiet

SV- Sosialistisk Venstrepartiet

SSB- Statistisk sentralbyrå

Errata

Page	Line	Type of correction	Correction made to the text)
11	11	Endnote removal	reference added to list
11	11	Updated figures	877 227
11	11	Reference -removal of footnote	2023
11	12	Reference -removal of footnote	SSB 2022
12	1	Adding a word	percent
14	15	Reference -removed '&'	and
36	16	Reference- moved	(Bourke, 2004, p.3
40	5	Reference	Removed 2 names added 'et.al.'
68	1	Reference -removed '&'	and
71	19	References -removed footnote)	Reference added in reference list, FAFO 2019
73-74	23-24	Removed footnotes	Added 'and', (Rudd, 2015)
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79	4	Reference -removed '&'	and
79	11-12	Paragraphs joined	
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81	3	Reference and extra word	Removed footnote & reference on list. Also added 'of'
92	15-16	Text editing	'nation' added, 'Immigrants' removed
94	4	Spelling	against
94	9-10	Sentence structure	'go out and join political parties on their own were already way ahead'
94	16	Spelling	Political attitudes
95	11	Text	Deleted 'those'. Added 'informants'
97	11-12	2 paragraphs joined together	'...ethnic minorities in Norway? The experience...'
98	1	Reference	Removed '&' and '()'. Added 'and'
99	4, 11	Removed 2 footnotes	(Knežević, 2023), (Pedja Kalajdzic et al., 2021)
101	16	Text editing	was essential
106	5	Remove repeated word	to
107-114	All	Whole Reference list	From APA 6 to APA 7

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Globally there is an increase in the number of refugees (UN, [2022](#)). Refugees are “people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country” (UNHCR, [2023](#)). Receiving states for refugees are preoccupied with inclusion of these newcomers. The emphasis primarily is on economic, social, and cultural integration to enhance the livelihoods of refugees. However, equally important is the political integration of refugees in their new countries. It plays a role in the overall integration of refugees. Political participation of refugees in their new countries is hampered and delayed by several legal issues such as citizenship and electoral law. Norway is one of the receiving countries and known as one of the best liberal democracies in the world. But participation of those with refugee background in party politics is limited.

This study investigates the experiences of immigrant members with refugee background in political parties in Norway. The focus of the research is limited to two political parties namely, Sosialistisk Venstrepartiet (SV) and Arbeiderpartiet (AP). Both parties have attracted the immigrant vote over the past years (Bergh & Bjørklund, 2011). The interest of the thesis is the intercultural issues that are at play in the space of a political party whereby immigrant members meet and interact with the majority native members. To understand the experiences of immigrants in political parties, the thesis theoretical framework is based social capital, social network theory, social and cultural capital and intersectionality.

1.1. Research Type

This is an inductive and qualitative study. Qualitative research is best suited for investigating the subjective people’s views and perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research has allowed the study to investigate the subjective experiences of immigrants with refugee background as members of political parties. It has also allowed me to investigate native Norwegian members of parties to see how they experience meeting party members who were not born in Norway. The findings of a qualitative study are deeply descriptive rather than predictive. Therefore, the results of this study provide a better understanding of how immigrants with refugee background experience and navigate the space of a political party.

Political activist into Norway and development of interest on political participation

I have spent years in the underground political movement in Swaziland (eSwatini) as an activist and youth leader. Coming to Norway in 2015 brought about a sense of excitement to finally live in a democracy, not just a democracy, but the best democracy in the world. I had worked hard to transform my country Swaziland into a democracy, with not much success as it remains Africa's last absolute monarchy. A hard fight indeed which took a fair toll on my youth. Prison, torture, and eventual exile became part of my experience in my fight for a freed democratic Swaziland where the people could freely participate in the political affairs of the country. Coming to Norway, I was deeply interested in learning quickly the Norwegian political landscape. Which I managed to do through Norwegian friends and extensive reading of translated material (from Norwegian to English languages) and publications in English due to my lack of Norwegian language understanding at the time. I realized that the vocal and visible politicians were ethnic Norwegian and began to wonder about those who looked like me (black/African). Did they have a chance to shine in Norwegian politics? I wondered as I observed Norwegian political landscape. The high politicization of immigrants in Europe and in Norway during the so called 2015 refugee crisis (see Hognestad & Lamark, 2017), made me interested in understanding who were the members of political parties deciding on anti-immigration policies.

I remember my first 1st of May celebration in Bergen. It was a cold day, but I was determined to be part of this historic day marking the celebration of worker's life. A day that I have marked as an activist in Swaziland. It became even more significant personally because it was on that day in 2014 whereby, I delivered a speech in Swaziland, and I was almost arrested by the Swazi regime for that speech. That speech made me leave Swaziland as I was a wanted man. Now in Bergen in 2016, I was surprised by how different the day was marked. Speeches from different organizations. The greatest shock was the insignificant presence of police. It felt special. That was democracy at play I thought. In Swaziland such a gathering would attract several police and some in riot gear. They wouldn't be there to protect the demonstrators but to weed out any form activism seen to be against the status quo of an absolute monarchy. I was equally surprised that there was almost no singing nor chanting of political slogans in the workers gathering in Torgalmenningen except for

the international song, which is typical for the global workers movement. The march in the Bergen city center that subsequently followed the speeches was equally marked by no singing, except some drumming from one union. Everything was properly organized and the marchers were orderly. I was surprised not only by how orderly the event was but by the lack of class struggle songs. I craved that energy coming from struggle songs. Surely, I was in a different political culture whereby such songs have lost their significance. I assumed that the activists singing culture had nearly disappeared since the Norwegian society had transformed from being mainly working class into middle class and thanks to the socialist policies of the past decades.

This was my first, but it was not my last, and I have witnessed the same in party meetings and congresses. There is no singing. I would expect this from left or socialist parties, but it was the same, there was no singing. The singing from my political culture was and still is important for socializing members and followers with easy slogans about the struggles we were engaged in. It was also important for creating and maintaining an identity for the cause and to keep the fight on (Debly, 2014). The songs were equally comforting in difficult situations, either when one was detained in prison or facing other life challenges because of the struggle. Some of those songs I hymn today as I have nobody else to sing with here in exile. But they do keep me going.

My background as a political activists and asylum seeker in Norway made me develop a strong interest in understanding the experiences of immigrants with refugee background in political parties. In democracies political parties have enormous power as gate keepers for a political career. Therefore, it became an easy choice to investigate political parties when studying political participation of immigrants.

The thesis discusses political participation of immigrant party members (with refugee background) in two political parties, SV and AP and how interactions between natives and immigrant members play out in the space of the party. The thesis is based on interviews with party members both native and immigrant members from. Immigrants tend to vote for the political left in Norway and these two parties are the traditional left parties in Norway which have amassed the immigrant vote over the past years. (Bergh & Bjørklund, 2011). Left wing parties unlike right wing parties have historically been attracting ethnic minority voters, nominate minority candidates in their election lists and members into their ranks (Bergh & Bjørklund, 2011; Dancygier, 2013). SV and AP have

visibly influential members with immigrant background compared to other political parties in Norway.

1.2. The context of Norway

Norway has received immigrants in the past decades and has at a political level taken a deliberate move to integrate immigrants in economic and social life. Due to increased immigration, the demographic composition of Norway is increasingly more diverse (Morad, 2014). Norway is usually the exception in many issues such as being a highly rated democracy¹, however, it suffers from the poor participation of immigrants like the rest of the liberal democracies (Bergh & Bjørklund, 2010; Bird et al., 2011). It is therefore important to understand the experiences of immigrants who are in political parties. According to Norway's Central Statistics Bureau (SSB, 2023) there are 16 percent (877 227) with immigrant background in Norway and those with refugee background account for 4.5 % (244 660) according to (SSB, 2022). Legally, immigrants are allowed to participate in local politics after 3 years of legal residence and upon acquiring Norwegian citizenship for national politics. Acquiring citizenship requires 7 years of legal residence and a fulfillment of Norwegian language and social studies exams.

The percentage of people active in party politics is not very high and has gone down over the years. According to SSB (2017) while 9 percent of the population over 16 years were a member of a political party in 2001, fast forward to 2017 there is 7 percent. A share on active members in the whole period has been "2-3 percent." A study done by FAFO in 2022 state that immigrants from the 3 countries that have the highest numbers of individuals with refugee background shows that in the last two years those who have been a member or attended a meeting or done any voluntary work in a political party is very low [10 percent for Eritrea and Ethiopia and 17 percent for Somali]. This is very low compared to other forms of participation measured in the study such as trade union activities, sports and recreation and religious activities (Dalen, 2022). A report by SSB (2017) shows that 7 percent of the population over the age of 16 are members of political parties and only 2 percent answered positively that they were active members. The report further illustrates that political party and trade union membership has been dwindling over the last 20

¹ Norway ranks 1st in the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) 2021 Democracy Index.

years (SSB, 2017). Looking at voting in Norway, in 2021, 77.2 percent voted in national elections. Despite this decline, political parties remain an integral part of democracies as they mobilize the public to vote, contest for political office and in theory they represent the public interest.

Internationally, the picture is not quite different from Norway. A study by Bird et al. (2011) investigated a number of advanced democracies, namely, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Canada, UK, USA and France. The general conclusion from their work is that although there are some gains made in migrant and minority representation there is still a huge gap. Political parties suffer not only from their inability to mobilize the immigrant vote² but they also face what Bird et al. (2011) calls ‘diversity gaps’ whereby minorities are underrepresented in political party leadership structures and as party representatives in formal political structures (also see Cho, 1999). Despite the ‘diversity gap’ pointed out by Bird et al. (2011) there are small pockets of party leaders, members, and representatives with immigrant background found in some political parties in Norway. However, there has been less research looking into the experiences of immigrants inside political parties. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of experiences of immigrant party members with refugee background in political parties.

In light of the low level of participation of immigrants in the electoral process of Norway, and the challenges of descriptive representation of immigrants and minorities, the study’s main research question is: what are the experiences of immigrant’s participation in political parties in Norway?

There are three secondary research questions connected to the main question;

1. What are the pathways of immigrants into political parties?
2. What are the perceptions of immigrant and native members on the political culture of Norway and its influence on political participation?
3. What are the perceptions of immigrant and native members on immigrant representation in political parties?

² Blant norskfødte med to innvandrereforeldre var deltakelsen 57 i 2017, den sank til 52 prosent i 2021. Nedgangen var klarest blant norskfødte med foreldre fra afrikanske og asiatiske land, 54 prosent i 2017 mot 49 prosent i 2021. [<https://www.ssb.no/valg/stortingsvalg/statistikk/valgdeltakelse/artikler/valgdeltakelsen-sank-litt-blant-de-middelaldrende>]

1.3. Significance of immigrant's political participation

Political participation is a key tenant of democracy, hence an inseparable relationship between participation and democracy exists. “Where few take part in decisions there is little democracy; the more participation there is in decisions, the more democracy there is” (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 1). Dahl (1989) on his work *Democracy and its critics* used the concept of ‘inclusion’ to argue that those affected by political decisions should be part of the decision making. His argument strengthens the need for full participation of immigrants in the political system of their new countries. Therefore, the low political participation of immigrants implies a democracy problem as “...who votes, and who doesn't, has important consequences for who gets elected and for the content of public policies” (Lijphart, 1997, p. 4). Just (2017, p. 2) argues that political participation of ethnic minorities [including immigrants] is seen as crucial for democratic “legitimacy” and “stability of democratic governance”.

The study of political participation has mainly focused on the voting behaviour of immigrants. On the other hand, there has been studies looking at the structures of political parties and their ability to have immigrant members within their ranks. These studies looked at political party systems (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). According to Verba and Nie (1987, p.4) political participation allows that “the goals of society are set” in a way that optimizes “the needs and desires of society”[see also Brady et al. (1995, p. 1). The “responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens” is vital in a democratic system (Dahl, 1971, p.1). A democratic system is founded on inherent competition between different groups and interests (what Dahl refers to as Polyarchy).

The competition for political office in democracies is made possible by the presence of political parties who represent different interests and policy goals. Immigrants, like natives have inherent political rights to exercise. According to Brady et al. (1995, p. 1) “political participation provides the mechanism by which citizens can communicate information about their interests, preferences, and needs and generate pressure to respond”. Participation can hence simply be defined as the conscious influence of politics by members of a polity. Therefore, the low political participation of immigrants presents a democracy deficit and challenge. The voices and aspirations of immigrants could be muzzled by the low participation. Low participation of ethnic minorities in politics is argued to reduce their trust in the political system (Ruedin, 2013). This presents a

challenge in a society such as Norway where trust ranks highly amongst natives and is said to be the glue that holds the welfare system together.

The classical definition presented by Verba et al. and others which understood participation in terms of citizenship, formal electoral politics and state institutions has not been without critique. Other scholars such as Stasiulis (1997) have argued that participation should also encompass something that equally happens outside the conventional realm of electoral politics and state institutions. They argue that participation can involve many other activities outside the electoral politics such as participation in protests, art, writing letters, signing a petition amongst others. The explosion of digital activism has equally shaped political participation such that what individuals do behind their screens is as significant as the traditional forms of participation. De Marco et al. (2017, p. 1) define digital activism as political participation “carried out by citizens through the internet”. The internet has widened the scope for participation in both formal and informal forms. The use of Facebook, for example, to mobilize and influence people to go out and vote has been huge in the last decade (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015).

Bekaj and Antara (2018) contend that political participation has two sides: the formal/conventional and informal/unconventional. The formal involves the electoral process. Earlier scholarship on political participation was mainly concerned about the formal forms of participation until the 1990's when the informal forms of participation broadened the definition of participation (Van Deth, 2001). Participation may involve many other activities outside the electoral politics such as protests, art, signing a petition, buying ethical products such as fair trade amongst others (Van Deth, 2016).

Participation in political parties lies in the formal category as it is concerned about national politics and competition for political power. Citizenship rights are fundamental for many to participate in the formal part of politics. Immigrants without citizenship rights are hindered in their aspiration to participate in their new country. The informal part is everything that does not involve the electoral process. This may include demonstrations, protests, writing petitions, amongst others (Martiniello, 2005). Moreover, political participation is a central feature of democracy. At the same time, a democracy must guarantee political participation by including as many to participate in the polity.

This research focuses on formal participation through studying political parties as key agents for formal political engagement. Despite political parties' dwindling membership base in Europe over the past decades, they remain a vital institution for formal participation as they mobilize the public to vote and contest for political office.

Previous studies on immigrants' participation has focused on the voting patterns of immigrants in their new countries (see Bratsberg et al., 2020; De Rooij, 2012).The few that have focused on political parties have looked at how political parties bridge the 'diversity gap' in how they field party candidates during elections (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). A study by Soininen & Qvist (2021) on political parties in Sweden using the institutional framework (political opportunity structure) investigated internal party dynamics which function as barriers to immigrant members achieving a political career. The main structural barriers they pointed to are stereotyped roles immigrant members should assume, political culture and lack of tailor-made training programs for immigrant members.

1.4. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows: After this introduction chapter, in Chapter 2, I review existing literature on political participation and present theories that are relevant for the empirical analysis of the findings. Chapter 3 presents the qualitative methodology, positionality, data collection techniques, ethical considerations, Limitations of the study and data analysis. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 present findings and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the pathways and barriers for immigrants into the political parties. Chapter 5 presents political culture and its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion to members with immigrant background. Chapter 6 is about the perceptions of informants about political representation of immigrant members and the intersecting identities in political parties. Lastly, I present the discussion and conclusion in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical foundation of the study. Political participation has been extensively studied in political sciences and political sociology. Therefore, the theoretical framework draws from those fields for the conceptualization of political participation. I bring it closer to my field of intercultural understanding by drawing in theories of social networks, of social capital and of intersectionality to have tools to be able to analyze the processes that happen when people from different backgrounds meet and share the same space. In my case the main actors are immigrants and the native Norwegians who all meet within the space of a political party which is a platform to express political ideals and access political influence and power in both local and national political institutions. I begin the chapter by conceptualizing political participation.

2.1. Conceptualizing political participation

The study of political participation was compounded by the universal suffrage of rights which expanded all citizens at maturity age the right to vote: From the women struggles, to the civil rights movement in the USA and freedom and independence for colonized nations. The legal expansion of the right to participate and the rights to freedom association laid a foundation for research to look at other cleavages in the levels of participation for different groups in society. Research on political participation of immigrants has been of growing significance in liberal democracies to investigate and understand the gaps in participation between the majority population and those with immigrant background [(see Bratsberg et al., (2021); De Rooji, (2012); Morales & Giugni, 2011); Odmalm (2005); Campbell, 2013; La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998)].

Many of these studies focus on three dimensions that influence political participation of immigrants; individual, group and environmental factors. Individual factors include education level, language of the receiving country, income, occupation amongst others. Group factors involve the immigrant's size and depth of social networks. Lastly, environmental/ contextual factors include the political climate, political culture and legal-institutional parameters such as immigrants right to vote.

For the purposes of this thesis political participation is conceptualized according to Brady et al. (1995, p. 1) who defined it as “the mechanism by which citizens can communicate information

about their interests, preferences, and needs and generate pressure to respond”. Van Deth (2001, p.5) in his work of theoretically analyzing the main definitions of political participation alluded to three (3) fundamental pillars in conceptualizing participation. First, the role of people as citizens. Secondly, it is an activity or action. Thirdly, it is voluntary, implying that no one should be compelled by law to participate. And lastly, it is concerned about the political system, that is government and politics.

Political participation has greatly expanded and should not only be viewed as something that happens in the conventional realm of electoral politics and state institutions (Stasiulis, 1997). The expansion of the definition of political participation to include informal forms of participation has dramatically made its conceptualization vastly difficult. Moreover, this means that the conceptualization should be attuned to the changing nature of democracies and ways in which people engage in politics (Van Deth, 2016). However, for the purpose of this study I revert to the conceptualization of participation as the conscious influence of politics by members of a polity through the conventional institutional structures. Here conventional refers to voting, being active in a political party, campaigning for elections. Such conceptualization fits well into the aim of the study which looks at immigrants with refugee background participation in mainstream political parties.

2.2. Social networks theories on political participation

Social networks theory looks into the sociological factors at play in influencing individuals to politically participate or not. The social networks theories on political participation moves away from the focus on individual factors, such as education and level of income because of its limited nature in comprehending the scope of participation. Robert Putnam in his works, *Making democracy work; civic traditions in modern Italy* to *Bowling alone*, based on research in the Italy and USA respectively, has been a key figure emphasizing the significance of social networks when he found out and concluded that individual membership to social and political organizations increased collective interest in politics as associations champion their interests. Examples of voluntary associations Putnam referred to are civil society, faith-based organizations, and trade unions. Such organizations help individuals learn skills that make political participation easier,

such as writing, public speaking, organizing etc (Brady et al., 1995). Social and political associations become a recruitment ground for political office (Leighley, 1996).

Social interactions in interpersonal networks between individuals in associations are one of the mainstays for socializing members. They also help increase the size of networks for members making them likely to interact with members different from them (McClurg, 2003). La Due Lake and Huckfeldt (1998, p. 570) in their work were concerned about “political expertise and information that is regularly communicated within an individual’s network of social relations”. They concluded that the size, depth and political orientations of these networks determined electoral participation. Although the research by La Due Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) was focusing on electoral participation, McClurg (2003) adds that social interactions through friends who are politically active or interested can influence people to learn about politics and develop interest themselves to be politically active.

The social interactions approach in social networks presented by McClurg (2003) has three (3) advantages, first it makes it possible to focus on the different forms of social interactions including informal ones such as marriage/family. Secondly, it does appreciate interactions that happen within formal settings, such as organizational meetings. Thirdly, it acknowledges that not all forms for social interactions would result in increased participation. In the analysis chapter (the path to the party) I articulate further how social networks and interactions influenced all informants with immigrant background to be active political party members. These interactions were both in formal and informal arenas.

The literature on individual characteristics has long concluded that people of higher social status participate more than those of lower social status because of the rich resources they possess. However, the social network theory furthermore adds that those in lower classes can increase their chances of participation as they increase their social resources. This happens partly through the expansion of their networks by bonding (inward-close knit ties) and bridging (outward-connecting with different people) (Claridge, 2018). Bonding networks are significant for ‘getting by’ but bridging connections are crucial for ‘getting ahead’ (Putnam, 2000, p. 23). In the case of immigrants bridging is important for them to make it in the new country as they usually begin from

a very thin social network. For political participation bridging is essential for establishing networks across different groups and the understanding of the political system.

Immigrants are different from the rest of the general public because of the journey of migration, which disrupts their existing networks and sources of livelihoods. “Immigrants are likely to have smaller and less expert networks because of their low socio-economic status” (Leighley & Matsubayashi, 2009, p. 4). A study on political participation of migrants in Sweden concluded that informal personal social networks are an important factor for political participation inside political parties (Bivald et al., 2014). These networks are made over a long period of time, such as being active in the youth political party structure.

Srai (2012) citing Ireland (1994) argues that political parties work as ‘gatekeepers’ for immigrant’s access to the possibilities to participate in a political system. They are important political arenas for political activity and political career development of immigrants. Therefore they should not only be viewed from their institutional/ formal framework (contesting for political office, selecting and fielding of candidates) but to also view political parties sociologically, as a political community where different forms of interactions between different groups, classes and individuals interact (Celis & Erzeel, 2017). The formal and informal networks in political parties determine who comes into the party and who gets to stay, and I will explore how the informants experience the role of networks in political parties influence the participation of immigrant members.

2.3. Social capital influences political participation

The political desire of individuals to participate in a political system is to a larger extent determined by the habitus. Habitus is systems of “durable, transposable dispositions... that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations” and works in a pre-reflexive way (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). The habitus concept captures an incredible process where individuals are socialized to internalize social norms values in their body, mind and emotional schemes. This early development process is argued to shape individual behaviour and choices in society. The habitus expresses itself in many aspects of life as those socialized under the same habitus would commonly have similar cultural preferences, lifestyles and general way of being. Therefore, if the habitus can influence social behaviour it does as well hold an influence political behaviour. Political habitus is the “dispositions, thoughts and actions that influence the political choices of [an] actor and come

to underlie the political ethos that a change-agent uses” (Tejada, 2016, p. 98). The political habitus concept has been used to explain how individuals acquire different sets of skills and knowledge that are necessary to make political choices, sometimes leading to a political career. In the Bourdieuen sense political behaviour is shaped by political habitus. The political habitus itself is structured by social resources, and class position (Harits, 2017).

Bourdieu (1986) is known for his work on three (3) forms of capital; economic, social and cultural. However, for this thesis I focus on only two (2) forms, social and cultural capital. In the initial stages of the thesis, I had anticipated that economic capital would have a major influence on political parties as in many countries especially in political parties in Africa. However, it operates different in Norway since all parties do receive funding from the state and candidates do not use their private resources to run campaigns (SSB, 2022a). In his work Bourdieu, 1986, p. 19-21) concerning forms of capital, he defined cultural, social and economic capital as follows; First, “cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications.” (p.19) Secondly, “social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition— or in other words, to membership in a group” (p.21). Lastly, economic capital is defined as ‘immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242)

Social capital is not entirely independent from cultural and economic capital as they tend to overlap and build and strengthen each other. The amount of social capital possesses is determined by the depth of their social networks. Networks of relationships are an ‘investment’ either done consciously or unconsciously to be used in the short term or long-term future. Cultural capital is transmitted from a very early stage of life, and this continues throughout our socialization formal and informal institutional such as family, school, work etc. The family is one important institution responsible for transmitting social capital in the early stages of our lives.

Bourdieu argued that the lack of cultural capital could be as limiting as economic capital and a source of inequality thus affecting social mobility. According to Bourdieu social position is

relational as one's social position is determined the relationship they have with others in each social space. Social actors within a habitus are made up of multiple identities such as gender, race, sexuality, class, professions, sexuality. Due to the relational nature of human interactions, these interactions are shaped by these multiple identities and consequently issues of power, domination, cultural capital, exclusion become important. Anthias (2007) contends that social resources do not become social capital unless they are mobilized, and the mobilization happens in two ways. The first way is that it happens from a position of advantage in the structural hierarchy. This gives those already at the higher level of the hierarchy more advantage, meaning they increase their capital even more (Anthias, 2007). Dominant ethnic groups, upper class, men (especially white men) occupy the higher positions of the hierarchy. On the hand the second way of mobilizing to build social capital lies the lower class, women (especially black women), ethnic minorities, immigrants etc. In a context of structural exclusion these groups use everything in their power to assume what they do not have.

Despite the differences which exist between Putnam and Bourdieu on social capital I use Putnam for understanding social networks and then use Bourdieu on social capital. Both scholars are critical but have their differences which I appreciated to give insights into this thesis. Social networks are vital in the development of social capital. The social networks that are key for political socialization are those that help exchange political information amongst network members (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). Putnam pointed out to civic organizations, which are voluntary based. Trade unions, church associations and immigrant associations may play a vital role in establishing of networks. There's is a connection between social capital and socio-economic status. People with higher education, income and having stayed longer in a community tend to have higher levels of social capital. Such a high level of social capital is dependent on the deep networks developed over time.

Bourdieu's understanding of social capital is different from that of Putnam in that it focuses on power structures and conflicts, moreover how these social relations condition how one can advance their interests (Siisiainen, 2003). Social capital then becomes a powerful resource in contestation for influence in social struggles. In this study I focus more on Bourdieu's understanding of social capital and its use to negotiate social struggles. And in my case, the political parties are where such social struggles take place, therefore social capital is exercised in the contestation for power and

representation of different interests. In the analysis chapters, I use Bourdieu's understanding of social and cultural capital in analyzing the pathways into political parties and how the few party members with refugee background can stay in party politics. When it comes to Putnam, I focus more on his aspects of social networks which have an importance in the development of social networks. I do not focus on trust and norms as articulated by Putnam.

2.4. Intersectionality [multiple identities; class, gender, race, ethnicity]

The concept of intersectionality rose to fame in the past 30 years thanks to groundbreaking work by Crenshaw (1989) who argues that black women were at the meeting points of both gender (sex) and race. Therefore, their discrimination was not fully understood by looking at either one of their identities instead of where they intersect thereby creating special realities. She was arguing that this was the case in the legal field. However, theories of intersectionality have grown to cover a vast of areas to understand how oppression and inequality operates and is reproduced by existing social structures (Crenshaw, 1991).

Phillips, et al., (2022) point out that intersectionality places at the center the interlinkages between specific social identities and positions such as class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and refugee identity whose meeting points creates complex realities which may be privilege some and or disadvantage others . Anthias (2012, p. 106) says in this way, "classes are always gendered and racialized and gender is always classed and racialized and so on, thereby dispelling the idea of homogeneous and essential social categories." It is important to take into consideration the differences that exist in intragroups for those living with multiple disadvantaged positions and identities. Therefore, in this research it is useful to have in mind that the experiences of those interviewed undoubtedly help us understand the experiences of active party members with immigrant background but there are many other stories not captured by this research, especially those members who might have a different experience such as those who might not have made it in party politics.

I use intersectionality theory to argue that the intersectional ties (class, gender, race, ethnicity) that exist amongst political party members are very complex and contextual. This could affect whether the parties view them as an asset for drawing in votes. For instance Janssen (2022) illustrates this

when showing that gender and ethnicity can be an important advantage or disadvantage for candidate list position and preference voting (also see Nadler, 2021). The very same markers may be viewed positively or negatively based on the social position and geographical location of an individual party member. Anthias (2008) refers to “translocational” positionality, which is the social space created by social hierarchies. Each categorization places one in a different position (Lundström, 2017). The Nordic structural variations are constructed around rhetoric’s of gender equality, non-participation in colonialism and whiteness at the center (Mulinari et al., 2016). The creation of specific categories such as immigrants is part of the nationhood and sense of belonging. Whiteness plays a significant role in the racialization process. Hervik (2022, p. 1) defines racialization as the “process by which social and psychological processes situate people within racial categories.” Furthermore, it is strongly connected to colonial legacies and defined by power and privilege (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013) Racialization of immigrants is not only done by difference skin colour but also by cultural differentiation. Silverstein (2005, p. 366) argues that this feeds into the national sentiment the perceive “migrant populations as nationally suspect and potentially disloyal.” In the Norwegian context (Gullestad, 2004, p. 169) argues that “immigrants often have to demonstrate their loyalty more explicitly whilst praising everything Norwegian, on the other hand, “majority people are less likely to accept criticism by minority people.”

Mulinari et al, 2016, p. 8) concept of ‘subordinated inclusion’ brings to the fore although immigrants from outside the ‘west’ have acquired all citizenship rights they are subjected to subtle discrimination in social and political life. Political exclusion becomes a central feature in keeping immigrants away from the echelons of power. The term immigrant is highly racialized in the Nordic (Guðjónsdóttir & Loftsdóttir, 2017). However, the immigrants are a very diverse group belonging to different social classes. For example, highly skilled immigrants in employment are better situated than those with lower education. All informants in my sample had higher education. The highly skilled possess cultural capital which is central in positioning them to be able to expand their social networks and thus their social capital.

Intersectionality has profound influence on research of representation of different social groups under different settings. Intersectionality research of representation has mainly been concerned about the outcomes of representation of groups who are normally underrepresented [ethnic minorities, women]. The focus tends to be on the number of seats they occupy in parliament

(Hughes, 2011). This way of only looking at the outcomes of representation leads to an explanation of unequal power relations between the different groups as dominated or dominated and privileged or underprivileged. Such an understanding of power relations in political parties is limited for my study. Therefore I take the argument of Servers et al., (2016, p. 347) that representation is beyond the unequal political power relations of representation but equally emphasis should be on the “broader sequences of social interaction that (re)create the meaning and character of positions of privilege and disadvantage” Through the social interactions “power is performed and social positions of privilege and disadvantage are (re)constituted.” As such the identities are used to challenge existing power structures [through resistance] whilst at the same time these inequalities may be strengthened. Interviews or life experiences of representatives may help understand this deep interaction and how they locate themselves within the existing power structures.

Immigrants have intersecting identities such as race, gender, age and religion. Hence in this study I focus on the perceptions of representation for both majority native and immigrant members to understand how they understand representation given the multiple identities that party members possess. Equally important I focus on how immigrants themselves deal with their intersecting identities in a space of a political party whereby every member is equal but at the same time immigrants do stand out that is being seen as different) because of their immigrant experience and the way they are seen both by fellow members in the party and the public.

2.5. Conclusion

In this theoretical framework chapter, I have presented the theoretical perspectives that guide the analysis and discussion chapters. I use intersectionality to complement the social network and social capital theories as they are limited in articulating the unique historical and present realities such as racism and discrimination that non-white immigrants face. Individual level skills and abilities are not enough in studying representation of non-white minorities in predominantly white societies. Having a great network and all forms of capital does not shield immigrants from racially based discrimination. Hence intersectionality comes in handy in bringing a nuanced way of understanding these experiences. I also use intersectionality when discussing immigrant representation in political parties. Intersectional perspectives allow one to discuss the intersecting

identities that immigrants possess and how these are negotiated within the space of a political party.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed description of the research logic and process and the main methodological choices made in doing this research. The research design and methods include justification of the epistemological foundation of the study, and the qualitative methodology which informs the study. The chapter also discusses the rationale for selecting informants and sample size, data collection techniques, data analysis and ethical issues considered in conducting the study. In the last section the chapter describes my positionality as a researcher which is grounded on my interest and motivation to the topic. Reflexivity in the research is essential as I am an immigrant in Norway who was persecuted in my home country, Swaziland, because of politics. And lastly, in conclusion, the limitations of the research are presented at the end of the chapter.

3.2. Epistemological foundation of the study

This research is founded on ideas of critical realist epistemology. Maxwell (2022) argues that critical realism acknowledges that there is a real world out there that exists outside of our own beliefs and construction. Critical realism therefore combines realism and constructivism. Critical realism emerged as a compromise between the fierce contestation between positivism and constructivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It moves away from the empiricism of positivist thinking which argues that research informants are just subjects who can be observed and understood completely independent from their cultural and political environment. It further destroys the argument by positivism that it is possible for a researcher to “assume that the researchers can maintain political and cultural value neutrality” (Garrow & Hasenfeld, 2017, p. 2).

A critical realist approach does not search for objective truth as positivists do especially in quantitative research. According to Fletcher (2017) critical realism has the strength of

explanation and analyzing of social problems and providing solutions to tackle them.

Critical realism is significant for its “...simultaneously explanatory, critical, emancipatory and socio-political relevant” power (Iosifides, 2011, p. 237 in Iosifides 2017, p. 7).

Benton and Craib (2010) argue that critical realism is not concerned about just interpreting a reality, but it is centered on the ‘explanatory critique’. The explanatory critique allows the research to look deeper into the relationships that exist between individuals and existing social and political structures. These relational dynamics are compounded by power. In the context of this study, there is an inherent structural and cultural dynamic between majority members and immigrants interacting in the space of political parties which is explained and critiqued through the experiences of immigrant members.

Critical realism in this research helps in gaining insights into the experiences of immigrants and native members, and importantly understand the different structural and power dynamics between native and immigrant members and the party that allow or inhibit political participation. Baskar (1979), in Fletcher, 2017) considered the pioneer of critical realism pointed out that it is not important to start out the research with a theory that must be tested out in the field, but theory is good to guide the research. The theory used at the beginning stage of the research in critical realism is good for deeper analysis of the data and provides better explanations of the reality. In as such it helps researchers better explain the reality rather than to be bogged in the content of theories.

3.3. The party choices

There are currently ten political parties represented in the Norwegian parliament³ (2021-2025). Since one was limited by time and other resources, I decided to go for two political parties. The initial plan of the research was to focus on the two main political parties; Høyre and AP, respectively representing the right and left in the political spectrum. Both parties are in opposition to each other and have historically shaped Norwegian politics as they have run governments interchangeably for decades. However, when I started to do my field work, I faced difficulties in

³ <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Representanter-og-komiteer/Partiene/Partioversikt/>

finding informants with refugee background in Høyre and opted for SV [*I explain below why I chose SV*]

Choosing AP- According to SSB (2016) AP has traditionally attracted support in elections from immigrants from the global south where a majority of refugees come from (see also Kleven, 2019). This gave me the impression that some would be members of the party as well. AP is one of the parties I have chosen too because of previous connections with their youth league (AUF) and partnership projects they have had with the youth movement in my home country (Swaziland Youth Congress which I led), and I have personally contributed to the development of solidarity projects between the two organizations. Hence, I had relatively easier access as I knew a significant number of members in AP. But finding those with immigrant background was not as easy as I had anticipated. Most of the ethnic minority members I knew were not refugees, but their parents had migrated to Norway for work. Therefore, I relied on my contacts in the party to identify informants with refugee background. On the other hand, finding native members was relatively easy.

Choosing Høyre- I had difficulties with getting access and permission to study the party, especially getting informants. First, the party was not ready to assist in my research (*See correspondence with party representative*). I received the correspondence after I had called the party national office in Oslo. Whilst waiting for permission from the party leadership, I contacted a few native members I knew in the party to help me with the recruitment of informants but that yielded no fruitful results. Then I browsed the party's webpage and Facebook of the party both at national and local levels. I focused more on Oslo and Bergen where there is a high concentration of immigrants. Through that online search, I had fears that probably there were a few active members with immigrant background in the party. For example, in 2019 they had their biggest national meeting (Landsmøte). There were 80 positions up for stake and no one with immigrant background was elected to any of these positions (Krekling, 2019). However, I did send emails to one member with refugee background who did not respond to my request. I realized after the online search and lack of interest to assist from the party leadership that I might not get the informants I was looking for. Then I decided to start looking for another political party. I used the basic understanding that many with immigrant background traditionally vote for the left in the Norwegian political spectrum. The biggest party after AP on the left was SV which became my choice. I knew 2 prominent members

of SV at the time with refugee background. Therefore, I believed that I would be able to recruit informants within a short time in SV.

Settling for SV- it is the 5th largest party in Norway [They received 7.6% of the vote in 2021 and has 13 representatives in Parliament]. Just like AP they attract the immigrant vote during elections as they are on the left side of the political spectrum. SV is one of the most vocal parties on anti-racism (Venstrepartiet, 2019), which I assumed would attract those with refugee background to be attracted to the party.

3.4. Recruiting and selecting informants.

Participation amongst immigrants is low when it comes to general participation measured by voting in elections and even lower for political party participation. Based on empirical data, my expectation was that the participation of those with refugee background would be even lower. The recruitment of informants was not easy for me, given that there are only a few active members of parties that have a refugee background.

From the start of the project, I planned to focus on refugees because they have a different path to Norway than other migrants [migrant workers, students] therefore a different experience than those born in Norway from immigrant parents. Forced migration tends to be a turning point for those migrating, therefore specifically choosing this group was important for this study as it sets them apart from the rest of migrants or second generation immigrants. Horst and Lysaker (2021) building on Hanna Arendt's work contend that the great loss through forced migration, war, exile and gross human right abuses raises politicalness which increases the likelihood of political participation. In hindsight, I see that I was convinced that there were many who came to Norway as human rights and political activists from their home countries, who upon arrival to Norway would be interested to politically engage in Norway too.

The sample of those with refugee background covers those who arrived in Norway as children and those who arrived as adults [18 years and above]. The second and third category was native Norwegians and party leadership. To deeply understand the context of the experiences of immigrants in political parties, I deliberately included a sample of native Norwegians who represent the majoritarian experience. The aim was to understand how they view those coming

into the party with an immigrant background and how they perceive the party as the meeting place for people with diverse ethnicities, race, religion, language and how they all try to work together for the betterment of the party's goals. I expected that intercultural issues would show up in interactions both during informal and informal settings of the party.

In preparation for interviews, I contacted the party leaders, who hold the position Creswell (2014) refer to as gate keepers. The leaders were important for the access to party documents, party meetings observation and it was also a way to let them know that I am investigating their members experiences in relation to immigrant members experiences in the parties. When thinking about the process of recruitment of informants, especially those with immigrant background, I carefully thought about who they really are and what they may have gone through in the journey to Norway and settling in a new place. I thought about this because of my own story about being in exile in Norway and going through the immigration system. At the same time, being reflexive made me realize that those who politically engaged are the ones who have made it in the long Norwegian integration system. However, in planning the research I did not want any of my informants with refugee background to relive the painful or traumatic memories of their forced migration as that was not a theme for the thesis. Therefore, I avoided questions that would trigger those memories. The interview questions were strictly focusing on their experiences in Norway. Reflecting on the power relations that might be at play given the status some of them have in society was important. Arvey (2003 in Kalu, 2019, p. 98) emphasizes that reflectivity help the researcher to deconstruct their power and authority. However, in my case it was the opposite, I was the one with less power compared to my informants.

The actual recruitment of informants was purposeful as I sought those who were knowledgeable of their party (Creswell, 2014). I targeted active members who had spent not less than 2 years in the parties because I needed those with experience. I had some contacts in both parties (AP and SV) which I used in starting my recruitment. In some cases, I would ask the informants themselves to recommend other potential informants who would be interested in participating in the research. I would then contact the informants through social media (messenger), email or by phone. I have browsed online media articles, party web pages and social media platforms, mainly Facebook to look for informants. There were many disappointments as some of the informants with high profiles were not able to participate because they never bothered to respond to my requests. One

of the challenges working with politicians is that many claimed to be very busy, which is understandable in politics as politicians run from one meeting to the next. I interacted with some of the informants who accepted to be part of the research through social media, emails and through texting or phone calls and, or in person over a cup of coffee to have informal conversations about the topic before the interviews. This helped to make myself and hopefully my informants at ease before the interviews.

The recruitment of informants was slow and challenging especially for those who were serving at the national and regional levels (*Stortinget* and *Fylkestinget*), this was basically getting into contact with them. Some never bothered to respond to my emails, sms nor respond to my calls. That was frustrating, especially from public representatives.

3.5. Data collecting techniques.

3.5.1. Interviews

In gathering data, I aimed to use semi structured face to face interviews with immigrants for all informants. According to Adams (2015) semi structured interviews is in-depth conversation between the researcher and the informant is best suited for qualitative research. One of the advantages of semi structured interview is that researcher has the possibility to ask to follow up questions. The interviews were guided by a written interview guide which had a few questions and allowing informants to share their experiences (Creswell, 2014). The interviews provided the raw data needed to understand the participation experiences of immigrants as members of political parties. To avoid exhaustion on both the researcher and the informants, I took Adams (2015) advice of keeping interviews within one hour. All the interviews were between 40-60 minutes, and it was enough time to gather the relevant data.

Due to limited financial resources for my project, I could not travel to the places of abode of some informants to conduct interviews especially those outside Oslo and Bergen. I therefore, opted for the use of (online) digital platforms (zoom and teams) to conduct the video interviews, which has been extensively incorporated into qualitative research during the Covid-19 pandemic. (Katarzyna, 2020). However, digital interviews only comprise a small part of the sample.

Interviews form an integral part of knowledge production for qualitative research, whereby the “researcher and the informant’s “interaction’ co-produce knowledge” (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 4). Researchers are invited into the life world of the informants and navigate the subjective meanings of the informants. I used open ended questions, which Carter and Little (2007) contend is important for qualitative research in allowing informants to explain and describe their experiences about the study phenomenon. Follow up questions were equally important in keeping the interviews flowing. In all the interviews I took notes where necessary, but I was careful not to overdo it and disturb the flow of the interviews.

Creswell (2014) warns us about the limitations of interviews especially for informants that are not well articulate. Culture, language and knowledge of the theme being investigated are some of the factors that may influence the quality of interviews. During the field work, as anticipated I encountered some informants who could not conduct the interviews in English but only in Norwegian. Therefore, I conducted the interviews in Norwegian. I asked a native Norwegian to translate the transcript into English as I am still slower in Norwegian, and this helped to save time.

During the interviews I was always careful about asking about the possibility of informants urge of sharing more than expected. As an asylum seeker myself, I was aware that the experiences of refugees might be very painful, hence the interviews could trigger deep seated traumas that the informants might have. In an attempt to avert this, I would avoid asking questions about the experiences of fleeing, but only focus on their experiences in political parties in Norway.

3.5.2. Use of documents

Secondary sources of data are important for qualitative research. Documents, diaries, newspapers allow researchers to accurately capture the “words and language” of informants Creswell (2014, p.191). In this research I have gathered relevant documents of the party that have something to do towards having an inclusive environment for people with minority background [I use the term minority because that is the term, they use rather than immigrants]. There are documents that are public, and some are internal party documents not for the public. The public party documents were retrieved from the parties’ websites. However, the internal party documents were made available

by the party leadership. The parties' documents were used as secondary sources of data since I did not specifically analyze them in detail as in content analysis. But only looked for common themes such as diversity, inclusion and immigration. In the parties' websites for example I was looking for the key party principles and how one is admitted being a member. The documents I looked at are listed below:

- ❖ Party programs for the current period (2021-2025)
- ❖ AP Minoritetsutvalg 2021 Minoritetsutvalgets anbefalinger
- ❖ SV Antirasistisk platform

3.5.3. Participant observation

Participant observation is a way of data collecting by observation of participants of the study as they go about their activities (Musante & De Walt, 2010). It involves writing detailed field notes about what was observed. The aim of participant observation was to get a sense of what happens during political party meetings and equally important observe the interactions between members who might represent different political background, interests, and goals and understanding the space provided by the party for people from diverse backgrounds. In participation I relied only on taking notes and writing a detailed report the same day after I was out observing a meeting.

I have observed some [4 in total] meetings of both parties, meaning 2 for each party. One was a local chapter meeting to welcome new members into the party. To gain access and consent, I asked for permission from the individual party leaders responsible for organizing the meetings. In the smaller meetings I was introduced as a researcher to the rest of the parties' members. But in the bigger meetings, I would be more anonymous except when I introduce myself to those members I interact with. The range of the meetings' duration was between and 2 and 5 hours.

3.6.1. Number of informants

The ideal number of informants in a qualitative study is an unresolved one. Creswell (2014) suggests that for qualitative research the distinctive nature of the five (5) qualitative designs (ethnography, phenomenology, case study, grounded theory, narrative) determines the sample

size. For a phenomenological study Creswell (2014, p. 239) proposes a sample size of between 3 and 10 informants. In total I had 13 informants. I had an aim of having 50/50 % gender balance for the informants, but when doing the recruitment of informants, it proved very difficult to achieve that with immigrant women hence I ended up not meeting that goal.

Category	Number of informants	Sex	Age (coming to Norway)
Refugee background who came as children	3	2 males 1 female	3-12 years
Refugee background who came as adults	5	4 males 1 female	22-30 years
Majority members (native)	4	2 males 2 females	
Party leadership	SV-1 AP (an immigrant member filled in the space of party secretariat after being assigned by party secretary. Therefore, was interviewed as representative of the party and as an immigrant.		
Total informants	13		

Table 1: Distribution of informants

3.6. Data analysis

The empirical analysis of the thesis is made of two parts. First party documents from both political parties and thematic analysis of interviews and notes from meetings I observed. 13 interviews were conducted as part of this research and 4 meetings were observed. One of the most important steps in data analysis is familiarization with the data. The process of transcribing the data helped me to be familiar with the data as I transcribed all the interviews that were conducted in English. Although I can communicate verbally and in writing in Norwegian, for the other 4 interviews that were conducted in Norwegian language, I asked a native Norwegian speaker to transcribe those interviews for efficiency. I assured accuracy of the transcript by reading it through whilst simultaneously and listening to the audio. This process helped me familiarize myself more with the data. I used thematic analysis to sift through the data and better understand it (Braun et al., 2022). Thematic analysis allows researchers to reflect on their views of qualitative research as creative, reflexive and subjective, with researcher subjectivity understood as a resource rather than a weakness (Gough & Madill, 2012).

The data analysis is based on thematic analysis. Thematic analysis in qualitative research is a data analysis method “which involves systematic process of data coding to develop themes” which are the ultimate analytical purpose (Braun & Clarke, 2022). It allows reflexivity and the subjectivity of the researcher in knowledge production together with informants as a strength rather than a weakness (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "Qualitative research is about meaning and meaning-making, and viewing these as always context-bound, positioned and situated, and qualitative data analysis is about telling ‘stories’, about interpreting, and creating, not discovering, and finding the ‘truth’ that is either ‘out there’ and findable from, or buried deep within, the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 591).

In thematic analysis the theoretical underpinnings are equally important in grounding the analysis process. Therefore, in conducting the analysis my set of beliefs and values were involved in the process of understanding the participation of immigrants in political parties. My experience as a political activist and asylum seeker shaped how I understood and interpreted the data. “Themes “reflect considerable analytic ‘work,’ and are actively created by the researcher at the intersection

of data, analytic process and subjectivity” (Braun & Clark, 2019, p. 594). In the analysis of the data what was important was to generate themes that made meaning. I did not start the analysis with preconceived themes that I then looked for in the data when doing the analysis. However, theoretical assumptions were essential in developing the themes as they were important in the framing of the semi structured interview questions for informants.

The notes from the observed meetings together with sourced party documents were all key in developing and developing of the key themes during data analysis. Some of the generated themes from the data; discrimination and racialization, feeling welcomed in a party, language, diversity, and minorities representation.

3.7. My position and role as a researcher

As I described in the introduction, I am born in Swaziland (eSwatini) and has for close to two decades been a political and human rights activist in the fight for democracy and freedom in my home country. Swaziland is one of Africa’s last absolute monarch, where political parties are outlawed and the king controls all three arms of government. I have experience in human rights work, with NGO's and being a member and leader of an underground political party. Due to my political activist in Swaziland, I have been subjected to persecution by the king’s regime as I faced police brutality and arrests. My longest incarceration was between 2010-2014. In fear of yet another arrest, I fled the country in 2014 to South Africa. By sheer luck I received a scholarship under Students at Risk to do my master’s in public administration at the University of Bergen, between 2015-2017. Upon finishing my studies, I applied for asylum in Norway. The process has been painfully long. After 5.5 years of waiting, I received one year asylum from Utlendingsnemnda (UNE) which is subject renewal.

Due to many years personal tribulations with the Norwegian immigration system, I developed an interest in immigration issues. Therefore, my interest in migration comes in two folds; as an activist and also as a curios student who wants to understand these dynamics. I have a special interest in political participation as a political activist in my home country fighting for the unbanning of political parties. Surprisingly, I’m not member of any political party in Norway.

My position in research is important not just for my own reflexivity but how it may influence how the informants view me and carefully respond to my questions. Positionality infers that “people have multiple overlapping identities. Thus, people make meaning from various aspects of their identity . . .” (Kezar, 2002, p. 96 in Bourke, 2014, p.1). I am an African man, asylum seeker, political and human rights activist and a student. As part of my reflections on my position as a researcher before going to the field and after the first interviews. I reflected on a few questions. First it was how the informants would view me and how I would perceive them.

Bourke (2014) reminds us that in qualitative research the researcher is one of the most important instruments for data collection. Researchers just like the informants are influenced by own socio-cultural background, which involves race, ethnicity gender, sexuality, class, educational background, amongst others. The interviews and observations we make are also influenced by our position. As an immigrant (asylum seeker) and a political activist, I have tried to make sure that my voice does not override the voice of the immigrant informants, who I can identify myself with, especially who came to Norway as adults. Nor should my voice override the voice of native informants.

“Positionality represents a space in which objectivism and subjectivism meet” (Bourke, 2004, p.3). The quest for objectivity is rejected in post positivist epistemology, such as critical realism which this research is founded on. “Research is a process, not just a product” (England, 1994, p. 82). This process in qualitative research involves the researcher and informants through their interactions and how the researcher analyses the data. Qualitative research is an interpretative research whereby as a researcher I am intensely involved in the construction of the subjective experiences that the informants share (Silverman, 2013; Creswell, 2014). Positionality entails that that the “social-historical-political location of a researcher influences their orientations...” (Holmes, 2020, p. 3). Therefore, our subjective self is always there as we make sense of the world through the lived experiences of others as we do in qualitative research. Ritchie, et al., (2013, p. 4) contend that in situating one’s position it is important to have “empathic neutrality” which means that a researcher should make their “assumptions, biases and values” known because there can be no “value free” research.

Being out doing data collection has been interesting but I had to be also aware of my own past and interest. I have interviewed informants who have served in different levels in their parties; in parliament (*stortinget*), in the region (*fylke*), municipality (*kommune*) and serving just at party level. Importantly I had to constantly remind myself to stick to the core questions of the research during interviews. Thus, for me as a researcher it is crucial to be self-reflexive as Creswell (2014) encourages qualitative researchers. Reflexivity allows the researcher to understand “how her interpretations of the actions of others is affected by her own values and experience” (Keman & Woldendorp, 2016, p.4). Reflexivity is therefore “an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research.” (Pillow, 2003, p. 178).

In the data collection phase, I met and interviewed some informants who I knew from the political circles through my activism. We were not close friends, but we knew each other. Others I have not known but they had seen my case in the Norwegian media⁴ about my struggles of fighting the Norwegian immigration authorities⁵. They perceived me as both an activist and a researcher. I did not perceive this to be negative but a good starting point in creating rapport. Lester (1999, p. 2) argues that “...rapport and empathy is critical to gaining depth of information...”

My positionality in the field made the immigrant informants view me as an immigrant, they felt comfortable. And from time to time some would use “we” meaning they classified me as part of us, “we” meaning immigrants. This was interesting because I would clearly state to them during the beginning of every interview that I wasn’t a member of any political party in Norway. I remember being asked by some [2 to be exact] informants during interviews as to why I do not participate in political parties. I pondered on the question and realized that I had many reasons not to participate, first is my focus on the Swazi struggle, next poor Norwegian language skills, and

⁴ <https://www.nrk.no/vestland/politiet-utsetter-a-kaste-ut-demokratiforkjemperen-bheki-dlamini-1.14840937>

⁵ <https://www.nrk.no/vestland/bheki-klarar-ikkje-bevisa-at-passet-fra-sor-afrika-er-falskt--blir-utvist-for-nyttar-1.14835448>

finally my citizenship status which are lacking and as an asylum seeker I cannot vote in national elections, nor can I run for office⁶.

3.8. Ethical considerations

One of the most important ethical demands by Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) is the protection of personal data of informants participating in research. For the purposes of ensuring that, a non-digital voice recorder was used to record both physical and digital interviews. For the digital interviews, I did not use zoom or teams to record. All data was stored in a micro-SD card that was never connected to my personal gadgets. The transcribing was done from the voice recorder. I never took pictures or videos. Ensuring confidentiality and sensitivity is very important for the protection of the general group of refugees which is vulnerable. Immigration continues to be sensitive and contentious political issue in Norway, Scandinavia and Europe. Therefore, my research aims to best represent my informants and their group and importantly, avoid unnecessary harm in line with NESH (2019) guidelines. Although my informants have amassed social status and power through their participation in political parties, many of those with refugee background in Norway remain vulnerable and with a limited voice. “The notions of social justice and human rights dictate that vulnerable populations are afforded the right to a voice regarding research agendas and processes that involve them” (Mills et al., 2005 in Wilson & Neville (2009, p.71). I pondered around the question of how this research could be useful and empowering to immigrants and political parties to better understand and broadly increase political participation of immigrants in political parties? This is one question that has been the basis of conducting this research. This question has guided the research and guarded against anything that might sway the research from contributing to empowerment.

To further enhance data protection of informants I anonymized identifying information. I never recorded their actual names but used codes. Although my informants are political people who are used to having their lives in the public sphere and did not have any qualms with being identified

⁶ See Elections Act (Section 2-1) Only those with Norwegian citizenship can vote or be candidate for National parliament elections.

as part of the study, I decided to keep the data anonymized. The transcripts were kept in an encrypted word document. After transcribing the SD card would be delivered to the IT unit of NLA university college for destruction and I would only be left with the transcript. Sullivan (2012) raises an important issue about consent for digital interviews. In my case, I sent the consent on email and asked the informants to sign it and send me a digital copy. In all my interviews I explained the aims of the project and how their data would be used.

3.9. Limitations of the research

Financial resources were indeed a limitation. I would have loved to observe more party activities and interview all participants in person. However, given limited resources I observed a few meetings and had some online interviews. My Norwegian language competence was a limitation as I would use more time reading documents in Norwegian language. Time is a limited resource in this project as I have only a few months to finish the project. Researching politicians was not that easy, especially when it came to securing interviews in the within the timeline I had set because some claimed to be busy with work. I had to respect that and wait for the time they were ready which further delayed my data collection.

The sampling of this research was aimed to have 50/50 percent gender balance for informants with immigrant background. But in the recruitment stage, it was difficult to recruit women informants despite numerous attempts to reach out to potential informants. The perspectives and experiences from a sizeable number of women informants is therefore not very strong in this thesis.

Chapter 4: Immigrant pathways into political parties

“...if you want to be politically active you need to go for it [...] no one will come and say hello you can be a part of us.” Olav

4.1. Introduction

Only a few people are members of political parties in Norway and even fewer amongst immigrants (Allern et al., 2016). Therefore, the most intriguing question to tackle in this chapter is *why and how do immigrant members join political parties?* In attempting to address this question, I first present the findings about the different pathways’ immigrant members undertake to get into political parties. Secondly, how they are welcomed and their stay in parties and thirdly, the challenges immigrants face in the parties. None of the informants participating in this study had left the parties and only one had already decided that he was leaving his party in one year (after the local elections of September 2023), so I do not write about exits from the parties.

One of the most critical attributes of parties as participatory organizations is their ability to retain members for sustained periods of time. This helps members to sharpen their political skills and parties to have a pool of knowledgeable members to pick candidates from. The chapter presents all these dimensions mentioned above which are key in understanding the experiences of immigrants in political parties. The presentation of the findings is intertwined with interpretation and analysis using my main theories, hence for this section I use the social networks theories.

4.2. Pathways into a party

Several studies that have looked into the political opportunity structure that allows or inhibits political participation on immigrants have mainly focused on legal institutional framework such as citizenship and electoral systems (Bird et al., 2011). This approach is structuralist in nature as it focuses on the structural context such as citizenship and the right to vote. Within studies of political opportunity structure, political parties are less studied in general compared to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s) [especially ethnic/immigrant organizations] in relation to their role in immigrants political participation (Soininen & Qvist, 2021). There are even less

studies concerning interactions between individual party aspirants (both natives and immigrants) in the space of a political party. However, political participation in liberal democracies is anchored on political parties who are key in recruiting, mentoring and placing candidates for political office (Bird et al., 2011).

Not all political parties give equal opportunities to immigrants. Nonetheless, ideology seems to matter. The traditional left political parties provide more opportunities for immigrants (Alonso & Fonseca, 2012). The focus on individual trajectories is influenced by the fact that Norway is one of the few liberal democracies (including Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) that allows non-nationals who have been resident for 3 years to participate in local elections, although Norwegian citizenship is needed for national elections (MIPEX, 2022). The openness of the Norwegian political opportunity structure allows immigrants [with 3-year residence in local politics, but citizenship for national politics] to participate in politics early as I show in this chapter through the experiences of some informants. From the informant's perspectives the path to the party is as diverse as the migration experiences immigrants have.

I first present the political issues that were motivating factors for informants to join a political party. Secondly, I go deeper into the influence of their social networks that led them into party politics. Here it is important to mention that some of them have been recruited whilst some claim to have been strongly motivated by their ideological inclinations into party politics.

4.2.1. Recruitment by political parties

Recruitment is one of the most basic forms in which organizations source new members. The increasing number of immigrants coming into Norway would in theory mean that political parties would be interested in mobilizing immigrants for votes but also as candidates for political office. However, they are not good at recruiting them. From the majority of informant's perspective, the political parties are very weak in targeting and recruiting those with immigrant background. There is no systematic way to work towards the recruitment of immigrants more so with refugee background. This is despite that both parties are very clear in their policies aiming for diversity and representation of minorities, the low participation of ethnic minorities in the parties.

When one of the party leaders, Olav, was asked if as a party they specifically targeted recruitment of those with refugee background, this was his response.

“Mhhh, both yes and no- not specifically refugees, not specifically immigrants but definitely ethnic minorities which means in a broader context in the most part we very much have that. We try to recruit people in for several reasons. One is that they aren’t represented in Norwegian political debate, also for the party it is important because that aligns with our policies in general. So that’s important”.

Olav pointed out that they still need to do more as a party in increasing participation of ethnic minorities. The SV landsstyre [National party Committee] (15 January, 2022, p.1) resolved that, *“the party’s regions and local chapter it work systematically to nominate many people with ethnic minorities”.*

When I asked Hamid about the ability of the parties to recruit those with immigrant background, he responded;

“I feel it is just like an open hand. Come to us! We try to make sure that you feel at home once you come to us. But they don’t call you. They just talk to the people they know and tell them, invite your friends into the party. It is just like that.”

The point by Hamid points out why the party is not able to recruit specifically those with immigrant background yet hoping that they will show up on their own to join a party. But once they are inside the party they would be treated well. The challenge is then how to make them interested in the party. One of the bottlenecks alluded to by Henrick allude to the intercultural issues that make it very difficult for majoritarian members to recruit immigrant members.

“I think it would be harder to recruit refugees, maybe it’s like the different cultural understanding or different cultures and a lot of uncertainties and how to lay it down and explain it. What things would you say to get him to join. Also the other thing it’s like, I know a lot of people in the party and the youth party, we don’t feel like we have good enough, like knowledge or experience, for example how do we engage and what do we say” Henrick

The lack of knowledge on intercultural competence by those majority members who have to go about recruiting can make it challenging. The fear of not knowing which issues to an immigrant makes recruitment difficult. Issues such as race, gender, religion lack of understanding of their cultural background adds a further burden for those trying to recruit immigrants. Therefore, development of skills and clear party guidelines to assist members tasked with recruitment would be central in filling the gap of knowledge on intercultural issues.

The lack of overlapping networks between immigrants and natives could be an explanatory factor as to why political parties find it difficult to recruit individuals with immigrant background. People are usually inclined to forge connections with those they share similar attributes with such as gender, ideology, ethnicity, language, religion, academic background and age amongst others (McPherson et al., 2001). The lack of these overlapping networks is not only because of individual choice but it is also structural, for example family, schools, work, voluntary associations, all determine who and how people meet. Knappert, et al. (2021) in their study in the Netherlands found out that personal contact between refugees and natives did affect stereotypes on refugees making natives have fewer negative stereotypes against refugees.

Marwa pointed to the low participation of women in AP, particularly women with immigrant background, as a problem.

“We have issues like we have issues with recruiting women in general in AP, we have recruitment issues with having women on top of the lists in general. So it’s not only an immigrant women issues, but it’s a women issue but also its very clear on the immigrant part as well.”

Recruitment of immigrant women into politics seems to be a challenge according to the Marwa and Henrick when he pointed out that,

“It’s definitely a lot easier to wear Hijab in Oslo than where I am from in the countryside. Of course, because of the understanding and environment [...] It’s hard to wear religious symbols, especially Hijab and Burqa for example in Finnmark and Møre og Romsdal than in Oslo. That’s the same also in the party.”

He pointed out geographical differences in the country claiming that to some areas are more open to the use of religious symbols such as hijab. The low acceptance of such religious symbols in some communities in Norway certainly increases the difficulty of women who wear hijab to participate. This skepticism to acceptance of Muslim religious symbols is not only existing in society, but such attitudes may be found in the local chapters of the party, he says. Overall, this would make recruitment of hijab wearing women less of a priority. The first Norwegian women in parliament, Marian Hussein (Stortinget) wearing hijab is from Oslo where religious diversity is more acceptable. Her political path would likely have cut before it even began if she was from a smaller and culturally homogenous part of Norway. The examples by Henrick shows participation of women can be limited by their expression of religion and by how that is perceived. The lack of cross cultural networks in smaller communities as pointed out by Henrick illustrates how a small community could be 'segregated' by the intersecting identities people possess such as religion and race.

I asked Olav about his opinion on what was lacking in political parties' abilities to recruit members with immigrant background. He had this to say.

"I think they, emhmm it's not going to the places where people with other different background are. And to come into contact with people with different backgrounds you need to go to the places where they are."

Olav highlighted that recruitment was hampered by lack of/ not enough social contact and social networks between the majority members and people with immigrant background. Therefore, Olav pointed out that the party needs to change their strategy. The process Putnam conceptualized to as bridging whereby two different people from different backgrounds meet and exchange information which could be critical in increasing the chances of political participation, seems to happen very seldom. The lack of contact between immigrant communities and majoritarian political party members could be caused by forms of living and work and also that political parties have become very elite organizations with few members [this is true for AP] (Biezen & Poguntke, 2014). They have moved away from a mass movement form of organizing where everyone could feel at home in a social movement and find their place. High level political skills were not the only prime requirement to be party members. As it is today, whereby mostly educated and well networked individuals are part of parties.

Trade union activism is part of both AP and SV's tradition and the strong ties to the trade union movement has made recruitment of trade union members into both parties a plausible possibility. AP for example, had "collective membership" for trade unions until the 1990's when the party transformed to individual membership (Allern et al., 2015, p. 139). Therefore, based on that long tradition it is not surprising that all informants with immigrant members were members of a trade union. Although their trade union membership was not their way into the party. Only two out of eight are active members of trade unions. The rest are passive members because of different responsibilities in the parties. However, this can be explained by the long tradition of the organizations which encourage party members to be members of unions as well.

In looking at the findings I was amazed that none of the informants talked about personal economic benefits as a reason for joining politics. Where I come from in Southern Africa, the most lucrative career one can have is to be a politician and most politicians are not ashamed to clearly state their motivation for amassing wealth and power. And indeed, politics pays very well through good salaries and kickbacks of corrupt deeds (see Bayart, 2009). Patronage and gate keeping by political party elites is an important means carefully monopolizes access to resources (Beresford, 2015). Ødegard (2009) in Bolin et al., (2022) argued in her study of youth Norwegian party members that it was less socially acceptable to put clearly personal and economic reasons as motivation for joining a political party. Hence many in her study were pointing to political and social reasons for joining a political organization. This is interesting in relation to my data, where all informants were relating to the specific political goals they had when joining political a party.

4.2. 2. A quest for just immigration policies

Immigration is a hot political topic in the liberal countries in general and Norway is no exception (Alonso & Fonseca, 2012). Involvement of immigrants in mainstream politics can be assumed to be linked to the difficult immigration experiences of individual immigrants. One can expect that politicians with an immigrant background would be burning about just immigration and integration policies given their personal history. However, my findings shows that immigration was not the main driving force for immigrants to join political parties. Only two out of eight joined political parties because of their burning passion for just immigration politics. The rest of the informants

did not specifically mention that they were specifically motivated by immigration issues to join a party. In addition, they are not actively working on immigration politics. Only one does that, Marwa, who joined politics because of discrimination (although not directed personally at her) in the form of racism and discrimination of Muslims which she experienced as a Muslim teenager through the negative portrayal by the media.

Ema, thirty (30) years old at the time) fled her home country, because of a brutal war and found her way into Norway as a refugee. When she fled, she was not engaged in politics in her home country. The transformative power of the journey of immigration touched on Ema and transformed her into a political individual (see Horst & Lysaker, 2021). Three decades after her immigration to Norway, Ema is still passionate and an active member of SV. Ema decided to join a party three years after coming to Norway, and asylum politics and international politics has been her driving force for joining a political party.

*“I joined [a party] because I was preoccupied about asylum seeking children in Norway at that time... voted [*party name withheld] because of international politics and how we stand in solidarity.”*

Also, twenty-five (25) year old Joseph, who was a dedicated political activist in his home country was forced into exile after being imprisoned by his country’s government. He made his way into Norway as a refugee. He quickly adapted and within a two-year period he joined a political party. *“I fight for children and youth. I fight for justice, international solidarity and all issues that applies asylum seekers and refugees...”*

Joseph and Ema’s passion for immigration politics has kept them going for years and made them able to recruit members with refugee background into the party. However, as mentioned, most of the participants immigrants with a refugee background are not occupied with immigration politics. Talking to Ali (36), who came to Norway with his family as a 10-year-old boy, he alluded that the most important issues for him as a young member of a youth party, at the age of 18, was local issues at the time.

“...many Norwegians think that because you are an immigrant and being active in a party politics that means you have advocacy or engagement in the immigrant politics or integration politics and that is not quite true. You have me, first thing I

wanted to fight for was cheaper train tickets in my area, that was my issue.... I wasn't an expert in immigration or integration politics.” Ali

Given the age of Ali when joining politics at 18 it is quite understandable that he was interested in very local issues which seem simpler or less polarizing than immigration politics, which is complex as it invokes national sentiments and a very much polarizing issue. Ali stressed that immigrant members should not only be seen as only “immigration experts”, only interested in immigration. Ali pointed out that the stereotypes of the majority (ethnic Norwegians) could cause harm to immigrants’ participation in the party by making immigrant members focus on only immigration issues in the party. Ali underlined “*and that can also be one of the reasons people feel excluded*”. The feeling of exclusion in a space where the aim was to include them is a complex one but in this case assigning responsibilities to immigrants specifically because they look different or have a different story could in itself be discrimination/exclusion.

The stories coming from my informants shows they were interested in a vast number of political issues, they pointed to a range from the environment, energy, international politics, peace, education, health, housing, jobs and welfare state and just local politics. Those with immigrant background were not only interested in asylum or migration issues. This was specifically interesting, and it might be that they do not only want to be associated with immigration which everybody would assume immigrant politicians are interested in. Simonsen (2021) in her study in Denmark contends that anti-immigration rhetoric and increasing anti-immigration sentiments are growing amongst natives. Therefore, immigration has become very much politicized which could make it more complex for immigrant politicians to be at the forefront in the fight for just policies. At the same time anti-immigration rhetoric affects the sense of belonging and participation levels of immigrants who live in a rhetorically hostile receiving country. In as much as immigrants are a diverse group with different political goals, the show of less interest in immigration issues by the majority of informants can be interpreted as a way for them to shield themselves away from the contentious issue of immigration.

Olav mentioned an interesting case of a politician with immigrant background who was placed under the health portfolio instead of immigration and integration portfolio when serving in

parliament. Because he believed that she could make more impact in that area and expand her base instead of narrowly focusing on immigrant issues. Health affects everyone, immigrant and natives.

“First of all that’s her background. She comes from health background. Also, I think it is easier for her to take a much more important position within Norwegian politics if you also do your best. She will always be confronted with minority issues because she is such a visible minority. But the party needs to give her a much broader base to make sure she’s got like ... if for example people that are depending on the health system see that they have...[someone] fighting their fight that is also part of the anti-racist strategy.” Olav

In as much as the leader pointed out that it was easier to take a position in politics when, his response could be problematized by the same sentiment he shared about the need of the party to position the member of parliament in a position where she wouldn’t be working with immigration nor integration politics. The intersection of gender and ethnic background would greatly increase the likelihood of her facing more public scrutiny when working with a controversial political issue like immigration. Olav’s position taken together with Ali’s may be seen as a way to widen the horizon of this member of parliament who is only seen as an immigrant therefore assumed by the general public to be only all about immigration.

The shying away of immigrant politicians from immigration politics raises an important question about representation. Who gets to represent the immigrant voice and experiences when representatives with immigrant background shy away from immigration politics? It is important to note that when political parties prepare party lists, they entice the immigrant vote by placing candidates with immigrant background on lists. This calculated move is to help increase the party’s chances of winning (Nadler, 2021). Therefore, when immigrant voters vote for a candidate with immigrant background, they expect the elected representative to fight in their corner. I discuss further about representation (both substantive and descriptive) in chapter 6 of the thesis. The diversity of issues and lack of interest in immigration issues could be linked to the fact that they want to be taken seriously, not only talking about issues only affecting their own race and ethnicities.

4.2.3. Immigrant/Ethnic organization activism

Engagement in civil society organizations is argued to be one of the most important pathways to politics (Putnam, 2000). Cyrus (2007) calls this way into mainstream party politics immigrant-plus mainstream activism whereby immigrants are first active in civil society before going into party politics. Hamid came to Norway as a young man after turning twenty years. He explained how he had always had a political eye but was mostly active in the civil society involving his ethnic community in Norway. He was, however, frustrated about not being closer to the corridors of power where important political decisions were taken, thus his decision to join a political party.

“I decided to make sure that I’m a politician and be part of those who make decisions.”

Hamid mentioned sarcastically that *“it is funny you know that when I joined AP, I didn’t agree with them.”* He added that he had a strong goal when joining the party which was *“to bring the party back to its roots”* and he saw himself as someone who would help in that goal. Taking the party back to its roots is linked to policy issues Hamid is concerned about since his time in the civil society, which includes; *“Family politics, integration ...family integration issues and job related activities.”*

The reception by AP was exceptional because of the public profile he had, and the party surely needed that for its own benefit. First to mobilize the voters with sharing Hamid’s ethnic background, which is one of the biggest ethnic groups in Norway and secondly to show that they are a diverse party. The significance of ethnic civil society organizations is on building social networks for individuals. Such organizations increase the capacity of individuals to understand politics through the process of championing their collective interests (Putnam, 2000). McClurg (2003) adds that the involvement of individuals in associations the possibility of them interacting with different others in that way increasing their network. Togeby (2004) found out in her study that participation in ethnic organizations builds social trust and tolerance which are all essential for participation in a democratic system. This is the bridging which Putnam referred to as significant in the expansion of social networks. Associations also have the capacity to help individuals learn new skills or sharpen their existing skills, such as public speaking, writing, organizing etc .

Going back to the experience of Hamid, when he decided to join a political party he already had a vast of expertise on organizations through his activism in ethnic organizations. I remember his humble but proud smile when he said.

“I was the only one that had minority background. And they knew me through the media because I wrote a lot of articles about different issues. So, they knew who I was, and they told me that they were happy to have me in their party.”

Therefore his transition into the political party was smooth. This is shown by him assuming a central responsibility in drafting of the local party program in the party program committee a little over a year after joining the party. And after two years he was elected as a local representative in city council.

4.Social capital developed from family

The parents [especially fathers] of Kumar, Marwa and Ali had been engaged in politics in their respective home countries which is one of the reasons they ended up settling in Norway as political refugees. Although their parents never found their footing in Norway as political figures their children have made it into the political domain on Norwegian party politics. The number of years spent in a new society is important for developing enough knowledge to be able to understand the political system of a country. Those who came as children [3 of them, Marwa, Ali and Kumar] joined a youth party first which acted as a gateway into politics. First, with age on their side, they had enough time to learn Norwegian language which is the medium of communication in Norwegian political parties. Secondly, they graduated into the mother party. The networks they have built over the years as youth members have helped them to stay in the party and assume different roles in the party. Building and sharing of social and cultural capital has a big role in increasing one’s network which boosts chances for political participation.

Coming to Norway as a young girl Marwa mentions that *“as you know, politics in Iraqis not something positive so in my family, politics is not positive. Both my parents are political refugees.”* But she was able to turn that rich family history into something positive for herself by joining a political party. She currently holds a key position regional position in AP.

When Ali was asked about his parents' involvement in politics. I could see him lighten up with a warm smile and he shared the following:

“Yeah, yeah, of course my father, the whole reason we are in Norway is because he was politically active since he was youth. Some of my first memories are political meetings in our living room... So, you can say that politics has always been, political discussion has always been part of my life and so when I came home and told him that I became a member of a political party and so on, they were very happy because we have always discussed politics.”

Ali had carried with him the memories from his parents' living room where politics were discussed under a brutal authoritarian regime whereby, they couldn't engage in politics freely. This also became a form of social capital in Norway.

In the African context it is not only parents that count as family, but extended family members can responsibility and influence children's upbringing in the same way as parents in a nuclear family. The case of Joseph who came to Norway when he was 25 years illustrates this. He told me that he was deeply influenced by his family to begin to be engaged in social and political struggles. From the books of cherished Che Guevara and Thomas Sankara which he had access to in his home he became involved as a university student.

Joseph said *“I come from a political family... I had an uncle who was a Minister of Finance...”*

When asked as to how he came to join a political party he mentioned that political ideology was central in making that decision. *“I know the political ideologies of the different parties so I chose SV.”* he said. Through his place of employment, he met one member of SV who was a leader of SV local chapter. Joseph is ideologically grounded as a socialist. His strong conviction towards socialism and meeting a fellow member of SV member who later became a longtime friend made Joseph join SV.

Roberto came to Norway when he was 24, a young vibrant revolutionary socialist at the time who had been resisting against the Augusto Pinochet regime. In our interaction he talked about the role of his family in influencing him to be engaged against the Pinochet regime. Political ideology and fighting for a just society were important for Roberto.

“SV here is enough in representing all of us who think differently and that can fight for freedom, solidarity not least to fight poverty... and with green politics...It is the party that represents my ideology.” Roberto

In the time of doing the interview, Roberto has served SV local in different levels over the last 30 years. Kölln and Polk (2017) in their study on political party members ideological incongruence with the political party was responsible in determining whether they stayed in the party, voted for another party or remaining loyal to the party. Their study shows ideological congruence to the party influences how members view the party and how they want it to be seen from the outside.

Family, which is the primary group for socialization has been studied to influence political behaviour of children. Parents influence on children happens through sharing of “knowledge, experience, interest, norms, values and ideologies” (Dotti Sani & Quaranta, 2015, p. 264). The parents/family effects, participation in civil society organizations and the level of education of the participants as shown above can be explained by both the social network theory and the development of social capital. Bourdieu (1986) talked about three forms of capital. He contended that cultural capital is transmitted from early life development throughout out different stages in life. Family and school are the key institutions for the transmission of social capital. Looking at the experiences of Joseph, Marwa, Ali and Roberto points out a strong influence from family. Their families were engaged in politics. The interactions in the home together with the availability of political literature contributed to the development of political language thus gradually increasing their cultural capital. The ideological grounding of Roberto and Joseph who identify themselves as socialists could be explained as an important feature of their early upbringing.

The experiences of Marwa, Ali and their families is interesting because they both came to Norway when they were children, 10 and 8 respectively. The stories of these two informants from two different countries who migrated to Norway with their political families illustrates the strong influence of families on building cultural capital. Furthermore, Bourdieu emphasized that the social resources must be mobilized to be turned into social capital. The mobilization happens from a position of privilege in the social hierarchy or from a position of less privileged. The experiences of the informants fall under those of less privileged. They came to Norway either as asylum seekers

or quota refugees with absolutely. But coming from that position of low status and poor economic capital they managed to use the cultural resources built through education and parents influence to be able to begin to participate in the Norwegian political life.

The experiences of informants the informants mentioned above, whose families were involved in politics shows the role of the parent effects (family) in the development of social capital. Although the parents had grown up in a different political culture, their political acumen was shared with their children and became an important resource for their children after coming to Norway. In the Parents effects on political behaviour of children has been studied under different setting and there is a relationship between the two (Gidengil et al., 2016). This relationship is not only on political interest but also attitudes, or ideology. The informants who were influenced by their families in this study come from families that were on the political left in their home countries and in Norway they are part of the socialist and socialist democratic families through the two parties. This illustrates the influence of family effects on their ideological orientation. In the Bordieuan sense this is where the family becomes an important site of socialization and development of social capital.

4.2.4. Activism before fleeing home country.

Only Joseph and Roberto were active in politics before coming to Norway. Both have strong ideological grounding as socialists. And this is linked to their activism and ideological development that happened before coming into Norway. Therefore, joining a party aligned with their ideology seemed a natural choice when they came to Norway. They both joined a political party within 2 years after coming to Norway. They highlighted that the main challenge was learning Norwegian language, which delayed their ability to engage in party politics.

Coming into a party from the experience of my informants has been an amazing experience whereby they were well received by the native majority membership. The range of serving in the party is between 7- 30 years. It is therefore prudent at this point to turn to understanding their motivations for staying in a political party when others decide to leave.

4.3. Motivations for staying in a party.

There are numerous studies on the motivations for joining political parties. However, on the contrary there are less studies meant to investigate as to why certain members of political parties decide to stay. In an attempt to understand this, I asked my informants why they decided to stay in their parties and issues they were occupied with. Here I was interested in seeing the role of social networks as a contributing factor in staying in a party.

Modern political parties are different from social movements as they are elite organizations with a few members. They are different from social movements in that they are not mass based hence the connections that members develop tend not transcend into their everyday life as in social movements. However, because of their elite nature and the need to use the space to network which is crucial for securing influence and power, close relations are developed.

The political parties as institutions have an inherent interest in keeping fair share minorities in the party by welcoming them and giving them training and positions. Many of the interviewed informants can be said to have made it in party politics. They have assumed higher positions. It is therefore paramount to investigate the motivations to stay longer in a political party. In this section I will not look into what has been covered in the subsection above on joining a party when it is the same reason for staying in a party, such as ideology or political issues. Feeling welcomed in a party, possibilities for personal development and a career, and political ideology are the main issues that have kept immigrant members in party politics.

4.3.1. Feeling welcomed and personal political development

I begin with the sentimental feeling and recollections that members had with the first few moments they were introduced in the parties which illustrate their sense of being welcomed into the parties. Abdul when asked about his experience said the following; *“I was well received, I was treated well.”* Joseph on the other hand emphasized the importance of training which he received in the party, whereby he attended an elite training of the party for upcoming party members. Joseph said,

“I learnt the language [Norwegian] and continued to develop my language skills and social studies. Also, I was chosen to be part of 25 members from all over the

country. It was an elite program in the party for upcoming politicians with potential in different levels.”

Personal development through the training in the party not only imparts important skills to an individual but helps create a sense of attachment to a party. Roberto was grateful for the support the party showed to the fight against the dictatorship in Chile. *“SV had helped me. SV was very much engaged in solidarity support and contributed in the fight against the dictatorship in Chile”* Roberto mentioned’. He stated that with the support of the network in the party he was able to organize numerous events to raise awareness and support for the movement in Chile. The fight against the regime in Chile was very central to his being as a political refugee who wanted to keep the fight even though in exile. Those early memories have lived on as a reminder of the solidarity and warm welcome he received after arriving in Norway. The sense of solidarity cemented emotional attachment to the party and became an important influence in convincing him to stay in the party for such a long period.

Ema, who was never engaged in politics before coming to Norway mentioned that her reception was incredibly good, *“I believe that ...most parties would like to have more members. I believe that most people are welcoming. In my party I found my footing very quick and got different positions.”* Like Hamid and Joseph, Ema highlights an important point about political parties needing new members and thus she was quickly welcomed into she party structures and was given responsibilities through the positions she assumed. The quick upward mobility has made her stay in the party for close to three (3) decades, in which she has served the party in different roles.

Social networks built within parties could be one of the reasons for members to stay longer. The party becomes their home and world. The social connections, friendships, a lifestyle, a career for some is what makes the party network so strong that it is fulfilling to stay longer. The longest serving party member in my informants has been there for over 30 years. Being welcomed well, being given space to grow and assuming leadership positions are among of the reasons noted with the informants for staying the parties. Therefore, this illustrates a party’s role in not only rhetorically talking about diversity but doing it in practice from the very beginning when new members come in, through party development training and placement of party members for different positions. One last thing to note is that seven out of eight immigrant informants had not

changed parties since they joined politics. The one who changed parties had changed parties only after a short stint. This could be interpreted as that individual members are willing to sacrifice in service of only one party of choice. When political parties do a good work in welcoming and developing their members there is a strong chance of developing strong loyalty ties to a party.

4.4. Challenges of staying in a party encountered by immigrant members.

Political parties are occupied about recruitment of membership in a bid to attract new sets of skills and increase their power base. Researchers are equally interested in the pathways into joining political parties. On the other hand, there is less research to understand why others have short lived stays in political parties. In discussion with party leadership if they do investigate the reasons for some leaving a political party, I was surprised that parties do not systematically investigate and document as to why some individuals decide to leave a political party. Understanding the pathways into a political party are equally important as understanding the challenges of staying in a party, some of which lead others to leave. In an attempt to understand I delve into some of the challenging issues raised by informants.

4.4.1. Time

Party politics is time demanding, some of my informants mentioned this. Abdul when asked about some of his challenges in politics, he mentioned time.

“I can say that if I do politics in my spare time. It is quite demanding. And I think it will harm our democracy if we continue like this, because of the role I’m playing and the role that other people like myself are playing are doing in their spare time... That is tiring. Of course, you are doing everything in the evenings and weekends and that is not sustainable. If we want to keep the democracy strong and functioning, we need to look into that.” Abdul

The issue of time was important for him as he mentioned that when his children were still younger, he had to take a break from active party politics to focus on his family. This is a challenge many young politicians face in general. But it is elevated for first-generation immigrants who might have a thin social network or few extended family members to help with caring of children. This is one of the reasons Hamid will be leaving party politics after the 2023 elections.

“I will not take a 2nd term. I will not do it. I am not able to do it. Because of family and personal things. [...] I think I will be more active in civil society than politics. [...] Apart from that I have 3 kids who are very young and trying to make sure I would be with them. It is very demanding.” Hamid

Time can be a barrier also because of one’s living socio-living conditions, Paul, a native informant, made an example of a young woman with an immigrant background who really was excited about being a part of the party. But he had his doubts.

“It’s not that easy, because you do need to have, you know it takes a lot of time to be a good politician. Everyone starts doing this as something on the side as volunteer thing. So, you need to be able to devote yourself. I have met? strong people. I have met one member, she lives in social housing, she is living probably below the poverty line. She has 5 kids. She told us she became a member of SV and she felt like we were fighting for her community and she wanted to be part of that. But I also know that it would be really hard for her to devote enough time to be able to get into a position. Not because of any discrimination, but not because you need money but just because you know her living conditions.” Paul

The living conditions of poor income and no luxury of time because of taking care of children is a barrier for many, probably more vivid to immigrant single parents who have no or limited family support network. The poor economic status of this particular member aligns with the socio-economic status model, which contends that immigrants participate less in politics compared to natives because of their poor socio economic status. Politics, the way it is structured, especially at a local level as alluded to by both Abdul and Hamid, seems to be a luxury who can afford to work in politics for free because most of it is voluntary work. For one to build a career in party politics, a huge sacrifice on time and the potential loss of income whilst hoping for a chance to secure a position where politics begins to pay more, such as serving at a regional and national level.

Soininen and Qvist (2021) in their research in Sweden concluded that party representatives found it extremely difficult to recruit party candidates for local elections who were in the middle of their carrier because of family and working life obligations. Time has been stated to be a major

contributing factor for low political participation among women. In Norway, there was recently an interesting case of MDG leader, Une Bastholm, who had to leave her position as party leader because she had to prioritize her time to her family⁷. Formal forms of participation such as being an active member of a political party are time consuming (Bäck & Christensen, 2016). Long meetings are a norm in political parties or other forms of formal participation (such as serving in the local council, parliament).

4.4.2. Digital hate speech

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)⁸ study on violence against women politicians' digital aggression against women politicians was quite rife. 81.8 per cent of survey participants in the IPU study had been subjected to psychological violence and the medium of the threats was social media. Digital hate speech among politicians is mostly experienced by women, more so for minority women but also minority men (Bardall, 2013). Women are attacked the moment they step out of their supposedly traditional roles and come into male dominated spaces such as politics. The digital hate experienced by women politicians stems out of the structural violence, misogyny that exists in society (Krook & Sanín (2020). I asked Joseph if he had experienced any form of digital hate because of his political work and he responded.

“It happens, in many different ways. And those who harass know very well what they do because I can receive a question online. Where do you come from? You are not Norwegian. What do you do in SV? Many times, I do not want to answer questions like where are you coming from?” Joseph

These are subtle forms of daily discrimination microaggressions which people who are not white face when they are constantly asked about where they are coming from. On top of not responding to such digital hateful questions and comments, Joseph has learnt a way of dealing with online hate and harassment. *“I use humour sometimes and I use self-irony when I meet some of these because they become dumber when they ask dumb questions.”*

⁷ <https://www.nrk.no/norge/une-bastholm-gar-av-som-leder-for-mdg-1.16070545>

⁸ <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2016-10/ipu-study-reveals-widespread-sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-mps>

Paul explained how he has observed digital hate to a fellow party member who despite born in Norway but is not seen as Norwegian because of her immigrant background.

“In the district Council I’ve worked closely with members of the party who have different backgrounds, one is a Kurdish woman who is raised in Norway. I noticed that when both I and her have talked publicly about certain issues, her feedback in social media is much harsher than I receive. I can receive hate and I have, but the volume of hate she as a woman of colour and a Muslim woman, the sexualized comments, the volume of it is much harsher. And she is told to go back home to where you belong even though she is born here.” Paul

Intersectionality theory points out to the strength of understanding and redressing the situation of individuals at the intersection of gender, race and class (Crenshaw, 1991). The ethnic minority member referred to by Paul was seen as different and insignificant hence she attracted ridicule and hate from those who disagreed with her. Despite her being born in and raised in Norway she was told to “go back home” as a reminder that because of her non white skin she did not belong her [Norway]. Those words would likely be more hurtful to a member with a refugee background who wasn’t born in Norway. Although, Norway is known for higher gender equality, women are still “held to a different standard than their male counterparts” (Megarry, 2014, p.3). Given that white ethnic Norwegian women still have their own battles being seen as equals to men, especially on digital hate⁹, therefore women from ethnic minorities would be expected to experience more digital hate when they take the center stage of politics. Moreover, this could acts as a barrier to their entry and or development in politics (Guerin & Maharsingam-Shah. 2020). Despite sharing the same stage together with his fellow woman member, Paul escaped from digital hate because of being male and ethnic Norwegian which is primarily as the right identities for doing politics.

Marwa also pointed out that women with immigrant background tend to face much hate.

“Women with immigrant background, another cause is that they tend to get more harsh hate like those kinds. Everything they are saying, something out in the local newspaper they are receiving very much hate and that is also general in Norway like

⁹ https://www.ldo.no/globalassets/ldo_2019/03_ombudet-og-samfunnet/rapporter/hatefulle-ytringer/ldo_hatefulle_ytringer_pa_nettpdf

the debate culture especially on Facebook on the comments feed are getting really worse. But if you are having a different background, you are getting even more. Only because of your background, only because of where you come from or only because of your colour of skin.” Marwa.

The uncomfortable, discussion of race and racism in Norway has become mainstream thanks struggles by non white Norwegians, immigrants who use their stories to highlight the problem of race. Equally important in mobilizing for the recognition of race is the black lives matter movement which started in the USA has had its impact in Norway too as shown by the marching in the solidarity march in Oslo in 2020 after the brutal death of George Floyd¹⁰ at the hands of the USA police.

4.4.3. Language

Norwegian language is the medium of communication for all Norwegian parties. Therefore, first generation immigrants have to master Norwegian language to be able to be active in a political party. *“Those who are leaving are those who have huge language barriers, so that is one of the biggest causes.” Marwa*

On Norwegian language, which is the medium of communicating for doing politics in Norway the rest of informants with refugee background (except Marwa and Kumar who came at a very young age) talked about how difficult it was for them coming into a political party. Even Ali who came as a grown child mentioned language was an issue for him. But it helped that he joined a youth party and the youth were more relaxed and the political language was not that difficult to understand as they focused on simple cases. The first few times he was not confident to speak in meetings because of lack of confidence in Norwegian language. Slowly he built his confidence. The other informants who came as adults were very courageous as they joined parties without fully mastering the Norwegian language. But because of their burning desire to engage in politics they had to be brave and throw themselves into the challenge and their bravery paid as they are still in parties two to three decades later.

¹⁰ <https://www.nrk.no/norge/demonstrasjoner-flere-steder--tusenviis-samlet-i-oslo-1.15042588>

4.4.4. Poor pay for local politicians.

Economic capital is one of the most important factors influencing one's ability to participate in politics. The situation in Norway unfolds in different ways than in other countries where individuals have to raise money themselves to run as candidates. In Norway, the political parties bear the costs¹¹. However, the bottle neck is in the party activities themselves which are time demanding, and this is the time that those with poor income would be suing to earn money in other jobs. To make it in political party politics investing time is key. Being in the party does not only help one influence party policies but the social networks established in party activities are central for establishing a solid support base and strong social capital which is needed when one aspires for a political career. A report by SSB (2019)¹² shows that the majority of those with low income in Norway are immigrants. 60 % of children living in poverty in Norway have an immigrant background. It has been shown that those with lower education levels (including immigrants) participate less in politics (Kleven, 2019). Participation in political party meetings is voluntary and unpaid and doing local politics does not pay well. Hamid pointed out that being a member of the local council was more about the passion to do something good for society.

“You just get some allowance but not much. You use 100 percent more than the money you are given...the time I used in the local council if I worked in an ordinary job, I would make 4 or 5 times more.” Hamid

Abdul added that it is a huge democracy challenge that such demanding work done by local politicians does not pay as it is considered voluntary work *“It's not work, they don't pay for it”*. Soininen and Qvist (2021) found the same challenge in Sweden whereby unpaid party work affects the disproportionately those who are already with low income, a category a majority of immigrants fall under.

The socio economic status model points out that immigrants usually participate less because of their socio economic status (Adamson, 2007). Bratsberg et al., (2019) argue that there is a relationship between political and economic integration in influencing political participation of

¹¹ Political parties receive funding from the state based on their strength in elections
[<https://www.partifinansiering.no/nb/arlige-bidrag/>]

¹² <https://www.ssb.no/sosiale-forhold-og-kriminalitet/artikler-og-publikasjoner/innvandrere-med-lav-inntekt-darligere-stilt-enn-andre-med-lav-inntekt>

immigrants. It is important that the studies mentioned above were investigating voting behaviour. This is a fundamental difference between party politics and other forms of political participation such as voting which is a once off event and not time consuming.

4.4.5. Pressure from ethnic group

The pressure from elevated expectations and demands from his ethnic group is not the reason Hamid will leave politics, but it is one of the constraints he faced whilst in office. And this might be the case for other immigrants especially those coming from bigger immigrant groups in Norway.

Hamid: *“The challenge that I faced was I was asked by the minority community, especially my own ethnicity, What did you do, why did you do that? How about you getting through this or that? Why don’t you talk to politicians about the difficulties that they are facing in daily life.”*

Interviewer: *“What would be those issues?”*

Hamid: *“Why don’t you talk to the system about our difficulties. You know about houses, jobs. You know you are just like. We sent you this place so you should pay us back. But the problem is that you are part of the political system. You cannot change the system as you like. So and our people are not fair? There is difficulty that people face, difficulties, and they are desperate so they are trying to get help from the person they know. They ask why. Somebody calls you and ask if you can go with him or her to NAV and talk to them and say we can fix it. And that’s not how it works. So that’s the biggest problem. So, the challenges I face from community are much higher than the other challenges.”*

Hamid feels torn apart between different logics of his fellow ethnic community and the political system he serves under. The fellow immigrants expect him to represent them in various issues even issues that are outside his mandate based on the Norwegian systems expectations and responsibilities of a politician. In some political cultures ordinary people in a constituency do expect their representatives to provide menial help when the need suffices. However, in this case Hamid is left with no choice must but to follow the rules of system he serves. Due to the logic of political processes, immigrants cannot avoid double loyalties and dual identities.” (Cyrus, 2007,

p.142). Here one can add the third identity of gender. The dilemma faced by Hamid points to a difficult position politician with immigrant background face, that is the question of representation. Who do they represent? Do they represent those with minority background more or do they represent everyone? I tackle this when presenting findings and analysis on the perception of my informants on who they claim to represent in the following chapter.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have been able to tackle the research question “*What are the pathways of immigrants into political parties?*” The pathways into political parties are diverse and constrained by many factors, individual, culture, social and political parties’ abilities. Ideology, recruitment by political party members, participation in ethnic/immigrant organizations, activism before fleeing home country, a burning desire to address policy issues and parent’s effects are the key pathways that have been discussed in the chapter. In as much the pathways into political parties are many there are equally several barriers making it hard for immigrants to participate, such as poor recruitment drives by political parties, socio economic status of immigrants, family, especially having young children. The participation of immigrants in political parties is not only hindered by inabilities of political parties but also the setup of the political system and socio-cultural issues such as discrimination in the form of digital hate. Low pay for politicians, especially at local level makes doing politics less attractive. Most of the barriers and challenges, except Norwegian language and racist laded micro-aggression affect both natives and immigrants, although to a larger degree those with immigrant background.

Chapter 5: Political Culture’s influence on participation of immigrants.

5.1. Introduction

The chapter aims to answer the research question; what are the perceptions of immigrant and native members on the political culture of Norway and its influence on political participation? It further looks at how the political culture of Norway which is played out in political parties influences

political participation of members with immigrant background? As a result of the experiences of immigrants coming in and staying in political parties which I established in the previous chapter, I find it possible to further investigate the political culture and the shaping of the space in which immigrants find themselves in political parties. Political culture has an influence of the way they experience political participation in Norway.

The political party is the social space where immigrant members and majority ethnic Norwegian members meet, and intercultural issues are at play. Political culture helps us to understand these intercultural issues between members from diverse. I begin by examining the definitions of political culture, then move to seeing how these were applied in different academic fields, especially political science and political sociology which have been the main dominant fields in studying political culture. By defining political culture, I set a foundation for bringing the analysis closer to my field, intercultural understanding.

My interest in this topic of study was largely influenced by the dazzling thoughts about the political immigrants who were champions of freedom, democracy, human rights and justice in their home countries before being forced to flee persecution and found themselves in Norway. The amount of knowledge and expertise they possess is enormous and Norwegian political parties would of course have benefitted from these brave and knowledgeable individuals, but many were nowhere to be seen in the Norwegian political scene. Pye (2015, p. 3) an American political scientist, wondered about the same questions when looking at political culture “does not each national community create its own unique pattern of order so that even the skilled politician is at home only in his native setting and becomes an awkward stranger in all foreign polities?” interesting citation –

Defining political culture?

Agreeing on the theoretical definition of political culture has proved to be problematic for researchers since political culture became of interest to political science. Political culture has been extensively studied in political science. Political scientist Almond (2000, p. 10) provided a widely cited definition of political culture as “a set of subjective orientations to politics in a national population or a national population.” It includes knowledge and beliefs about political reality, feelings with respect to politics, opinions, and commitments to political values (Pye, 2015). Chilton’s added an important input to the definition; “political culture is not defined by all people

liking the culture, or regarding it as legitimate. Culture is what is publicly expected and subscribed to, not what is individually preferred” (Chilton, 1988, p. 429-430).

Chilton’s definition is built on the understanding of culture as shared by people and connected to the way of living. Chilton (1988) agrees that individual attitudes and preferences are important in influencing the public sphere however those attitudes and preferences are not enough to change a culture until they are accepted by the common public as expected behaviour. Therefore, there is a relationship between the individual attributes and the social and political structures, an important dimension for understanding political culture. This is central in determining who gets to have power, influence and who gets to decide in a polity:

“For the individual the political culture provides controlling guidelines for effective political behavior, and for the collectivity it gives a systematic structure of values and rational considerations which ensures coherence in the performance of institutions and organizations.” Pye (2015, p.7)

Political culture is fundamental in determining how citizens relate with the political system they live in. Political culture, just like the main culture, has hidden cues and unwritten rules which are understood by those thoroughly socialized in the culture. No wonder someone who is a sharp politician in one polity could be a political novice in another political setting. Therefore, one of the most important things in the creation of political culture is socialization, which happens through different means such as education, childhood, media, and experiences with political or bureaucratic institutions (Almond, 2000). According to the literature on political socialization research points out that political culture is shaped in two ways. Firstly, persistence, which is embedded in our socialization in early life, entails basic socialization into the main culture. For immigrants the culture of the country of origin influences how they participate even in their new country. The second way of socialization to political culture is the lifelong openness which allows an unending continuum for new political beliefs and ideas throughout life (Dinesen & Andersen, 2022). The lifelong openness allows immigrants the possibility to learn about their new country’s political culture and adapt into this new political culture.

Recruitment to specific roles in the political process of a polity happens in different forms. Organizations such as civil society organizations, trade unions, faith-based organizations, social movements, business associations, cooperatives, and not least political parties play an important role in socializing individuals into the political culture and placing individuals in specific roles in a political system. Other important socializing agents are family and education institutions (Almond & Verba, 1963). [I explained in detail in chapter 4, where I wrote about pathways into parties]. The political and social systems which an individual is exposed to impart significant values and attitudes. The significance of political parties and civil society organizations is notable in shaping political culture.

5.2. From tyranny and persecution to one of the best democracies

In my research I was curious to understand immigrant's politico-cultural transition of living in authoritarian regimes into a democratic system and finding themselves engaged in political party activism in Norway. For those who came to Norway as adults (18+ years), only one of the participants was a member of an underground/ banned political party in their countries of origin. Considering that many of those countries of origin were led by authoritarian regimes which frown against democracy, engaging in political parties, especially opposition, would have attracted negative sanctions from those authoritarian regimes. Roberto who had fled in the late 1980's from the brutal tyranny of Augusto Pinochet in Chile summed it up when asked about his experience coming from a dictatorship into a democracy. He said *"There was no democracy in Chile[...]politics was illegal. It was about life or death. So, when you come to Norway its open. You could see the big difference in the culture and politics [...]"*

Roberto was positively surprised of the open nature of Norwegian political culture. Coming from a tyranny, politics was done differently in Norway. To be engaged an in opposition to whoever was in power was not a matter of life and death. The open nature of political culture makes it possible for those who want to be involved in politics to do it without fear. The democratic nature of the Norwegian system motivated informants to engage themselves.

Interestingly on the other hand, many years after resettling in Norway, a majority of the informants had a minimal participation level in their home country either in charity work or political commentary in media. None was an active member of a political party in their countries of origin.

I find this interesting especially for those who left their home countries for political activists, Joseph and Roberto. I posed the question to Joseph and he responded “*No, no, I criticize how they govern the country*” Joseph came to Norway as a political activist and refugees in his 20’s and in 2 years he joined a political party in Norway. This was the same case for Hamid who came to Norway in his 20’s. When he was asked about his involvement in his country of origin, he said “*I am not that active, but I make comments about the situation. And I make some interviews with media*”.

Hamid was never involved in politics before fleeing but over the years of his stay in Norway gained political clout from his engagement in Norway to be able to comment on the politics of his home country. He too is not a member of any political party in Somalia. It is fascinating how both Joseph and Roberto kept themselves away from party politics in their home countries of origin, yet they continue to be active in Norway. The time spent away from home country and distance seems to have been made political connection with the home country very minimal.

The low participation of those with immigrant background in liberal democracies has been attributed to the undemocratic cultures of their countries of origin (Bilodeau et al., 2010). When this is the case, how could we explain the low participation of immigrants in advanced democracies where they are exposed to freedom and democracy. One would expect that there would be an increase in the culture of participation of immigrants due to acculturation¹³.

Dinesen and Andersen (2022, p. 3) argue that the (re) socialization of immigrants in their new countries happens through “proximity-conditioned social diffusion”, whereby close proximity to a participatory culture is fundamental. The interactions between natives and immigrants helps in the (re) socialization of immigrants into the new political culture. In a study about immigrant political integration in Norway of UNHCR refugees conducted by Bratsberg et al. (2021) concluded the placement of refugees upon arrival to Norway was central in determining their political integration. In communities where there was a high participation level among the native population, immigrants had a higher level of participation than when placed in low participation communities.

¹³ “cultural learning process...takes place as an immigrant gradually experiences a new culture” (Adman, P., & Strömblad, P., 2015, p. 108)

Dinesen and Anderson (2022) contend that immigrants by (re) socializing into a new political culture do not necessarily lose their previous culture from their home countries. However, they build on what they have as they adapt into their new political reality. This position, according to my data makes a lot of sense when looking at that those informants who came to Norway as youth (20- 30 years). They were engaged in their home countries as political activists and continue to be active in Norwegian political party life. Their argument is equally valuable in explaining the participation of those who came to Norway as children and came as adults without being politically engaged in their countries only to be (re) socialized in Norway and are now active political party members.

White et al. (2008) provides another insight to the question raised above by contending that partisanship (being active member of a party) in country of origin has direct effects on immigrants participation as members of political parties. This would mean that those who were partisan in their original countries are likely to be partisan upon migrating and vice versa for those who were non-partisan in their original countries. In my data on 1/8 of informants was an active party member in their country of origin before immigrating to Norway. White et al. (2008) also made an interesting observation about the period of time spent in the new country and its positive role for political participation (also see Dinesen & Anderson, 2022). A study by FAFO, (2022, p. 101) shows that immigrants from two groups; Ethiopia/ Eritrea and Somalia showed less interest in politics or debate of their countries of origin than interest in Norwegian politics or debate. Sixty (60) percent of Ethiopians/Eritreans and fifty-seven (57) percent of Somalis were interested in Norwegian politics or debate. Their interest in political debates in their home countries was reported to be lower, 49 percent for Eritreans/Ethiopians and 32 percent for Somalis. The explanation for this could be the hypothesis of Dinesen and Andersen (2022) which contends that diffusion into the participatory political culture of the receiving country for immigrants improves participation in the new country whilst at the same time it undermines connection with the home country.

5.3. Norwegian political culture; A newcomer's experience

Part of the data collection for this research was observing party meetings of both political parties. The first observation I made was how white the parties were. The obvious observation from just

looking across the meeting rooms/halls was that there was less diversity in terms of skin colour. This was affirming my own subjective experiences of Norwegian media, especially on National television, political debates by political party representatives are dominated by ethnic Norwegian politicians. Considering that AP and SV get the highest votes amongst immigrants, I expected I was however surprised that there were not many with immigrant background in the meetings. In addition to that, another striking observation was that there was no singing in AP and SV meetings I observed. The exception was at AUF congress where there was singing but not in the vigor that I'm used to in Swazi and South African political organizations (trade unions and political parties) on the left. In two separate meetings there was singing of a song in each. I noted that only a few knew the lyrics of the songs as many relied on a digital text displayed on power-point screen to be able to follow and sing along. This felt very unnatural for me coming from a singing political culture.

Looking at the history of the Norwegian workers movement, both LO and AP singing was part of the movement (Knut, 2018). The singing wasn't professional. Everyone could participate and sing, and it helped confirm the identity of the movement (Knut, 2018, p. 111). The identity could be a worker, class, ideology, an identity about an issue the movement is fighting for. Unfortunately, this rich and beautiful tradition of the left movement is almost extinct in the Norwegian left. In the AUF congress I attended I was given a song booklet "AUF synger" as a gift. The booklet had numerous songs. I saw this as a vital attempt to revive the singing culture and in the few songs attempted in the congress, many had to rely on the book for the lyrics. Moreover, I was impressed by the attempt by the youth.

The Norwegian political system is a representative democracy centered on political parties recruiting and sending in candidates that become representatives of the public through their parties. The cleavages for political parties competition for power in Norway have changed over the years replacing traditional cleavages such as class, location (geography, religion, with immigration, climate change, public vs private sector support and issue based politics (Aylott, 2011). The change of the basis for doing politics affects the general political culture too. Despite this change political parties remain an integral part of the Norwegian political system.

5.4. No discrimination in our party?

In the initial stages of the research, I expected that immigrant party members would have claims to have experienced discrimination in political parties because of racialization. My take was that political parties in Norway resemble a white space, therefore individuals who are not seen as white were likely to face racism. Equally important is that political parties are key institutions of power and influence that shape society. Therefore, I expected a highly contested environment especially when it came to jostling for influence where discrimination in terms of skin colour would be used to discredit and ridicule potential threats in the contest for positions in a political party. However, I was surprised that no informants claimed to have experienced blatant discrimination or racism.

When informants with refugee background were asked about their experiences of discrimination within their respective parties, the majority showed a surprisingly positive image of their parties claiming that there was no discrimination. This was the case for the native members and leadership as well. Incredibly, all informants with immigrants' background said they never experienced any form of discrimination inside the political parties. However, some have faced discrimination outside the formal structures of their parties, especially when doing political party work. These are examples of what some of them said.

"I have never experienced any kind of discrimination." Ali

"I haven't heard that people are experiencing discrimination within the party." Marwa

This is interesting in that it implies that informants were talking about blatant forms of discrimination such as racism which they claimed to have never witnessed nor experienced. However, there were other subtle forms of discriminatory tendencies such as not being taken seriously [opinions from immigrant members did not value the same way as native members] in party discussions.

"I felt also as an immigrant, as a refugee, as a child of a refugee I felt that also my opinion was valued less because it was connected to feelings. Even though they say immigrants are focusing on immigration politics and policies when it comes to the matter, its valued less as well to be honest." Marwa

Adbul shared the same sentiments as Marwa when he pointed out that;

“I have been treated differently. Sometimes there are rules for the majority and there are rules for the minority. I say something and a white comrade [native party member] says the same. It might be that they would be listened to more.”

Not being taken seriously for raising one’s opinion has been extensively studied in race and genders studies, whereby opinions of non-whites are not valued the same way in white spaces. In the same way opinions of women are neglected in spaces dominated by men. This is a form of microaggressions experienced by racialized others in white spaces and can have devastating consequences for those who face it (Sue et al., 2007). For example, it could limit their willingness to engage in debates in a political party.

One of the challenging puzzles is thus that informants claim not to have witnessed any forms for discrimination but slowly in the conversation they revealed subtle forms of discrimination. Probably when many think about discrimination they think about the obvious forms such as racism or sexism, which could surely be difficult to find in modern political parties. But it could also be that the protection of the parties could be a way to protect themselves from the reality of accepting that organizations they so much cherish would at the same time have discriminatory tendencies. Or that the parties are truly progressive space where discrimination or any form of discrimination would not be found. The latter is unlikely to be the case as organizations usually mirror the social conditions under which they operate. Discrimination for ethnic minorities is a social problem in Norway (see Bangstad, 2015; Gullestad, 2004; FAFO report, 2019). Although the political parties would have good policy documents and rhetoric on stamping out discrimination, the membership of parties is a product of the Norwegian society which still holds some of these views.

On the other hand, majority members referred to the alcohol culture and food culture which they attributed as be subtle forms of discriminatory culture. Equality is one of the basic principles of socialist and social democratic parties. Both SV and AP subscribe to these principles, whereby ideology more than background of individuals is paramount for anyone to be part of the party. On top of that the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (2018) prohibits direct and indirect discrimination based on factors such as national origin, descent, skin colour, language, religion.

Kölln and Polk (2017) in their study on political party members ideological incongruence with the political party concluded that ideological congruence to the party influences how members view the party and how they want it to be seen from the outside. Back to my informants’ position on

that the parties were completely free from discrimination; it seems that members of political parties feel the obligation to protect the identity of the party at all costs. The party and personal line is blurred such that in this case it was not easy to tell if informants exposed their honest personal experiences or if they mean the party to be a space free from discrimination. As the data stands there is no direct personal discrimination in the party experienced by the majority of informants. Ali who came to Norway as a child together with his family mentioned that for him it was important to reiterate the position of his party rather than his own when it comes to immigration issues.

“Yeah You have come into Norway as a refugee, what do you think about refugee politics in Norway? (Pretending to receive a question from the media) I can tell you what AP means about that because that is something we have agreed upon at congress.” Ali

His statement implies that he would put forward the position of the party even though it might be against his own personal conviction on the issue. To illustrate the difficult situation that immigrants in political parties may find themselves in, especially when it comes to immigration is the recent case in Norwegian parliament. There was a proposition mainly supported by smaller opposition parties for the parliament to act in cases where asylum seekers have been waiting endlessly in the asylum system¹⁴. This case was rejected by parliament, interestingly, the ruling party (AP) has individual members of parliament with refugee background who also voted against the motion. As individual members of parliament they could have voted against the party position. But then party line seems to trump what would be seen in the common interest of individual members. Toeing the political party line is part of the political culture, especially in a proportional representative electoral system such as Norway. Therefore, the survival of individual politicians is linked to sticking to the party line and the party needs that to be able to control its members (Cox et. al, 2019)

The social space provided by the parties themselves might be the one that discriminates without individual members or the party's formal structure being discriminatory. Take for example those who do not drink alcohol or eat certain foods (for example pork as Henrick mentioned) for religious

¹⁴ <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Vedtak/Vedtak/Sak/?p=92237>

reasons [Paul and Henrick are native members]. This could affect the participation of some members in social events organized by the party. Building and having a strong social network is critical for party mobility and might be hampered by missing out of social events.

“One thing we have a culture of alcohol in Norway, that is after meetings if you wanna network people in Norway love to drink alcohol go out to a bar, so I think if you don’t drink because of your religion you need to feel at least very comfortable drinking you coca cola in a bar and seeing people drunk.[...] But I think, also to look at the arenas where we meet. If we always take it for granted that people drink alcohol it can be difficult. Even if it’s not said, maybe there is expectation that you take part in this.” Paul explained.

“I think everybody wants to welcome everyone and make them feel welcome and integrated but it’s not enough knowledge. It can be as easy as if we have like for instance let’s say Muslim doesn’t eat pork but then we have pork pizza.” Henrick

According to SSB, Muslims represent over 4 % (176 089 members in 2022) of the total Norwegian population. The Norwegian society has been traditionally Christian and increasingly becoming atheist. Religion is not as seen is a diversity strand that often neglected when studying political participation in western democracies as societies are more secular. However, religion intersects with ethnicity and race which places visible religious individuals at a special place when pertaining to political participation. The increasing number of Muslims in Norway is largely attributed to immigration and has resulted in cultural debates when it comes to food. Muslims prefer to eat halal. The increasing number of Muslims and the need for halal products has equally intensified the critique of halal, seen as equal to the islamization of the west including Norway. Fremskrittspartiet (FRP) and Stop the Islamization of Norway (SIAN) has been in the forefront in leading the campaign against halal (Rudd, 2015). The lack of food sensitivity within political parties’ spaces as shown by Henrick and Paul shows the low understanding of religious sensitivities which make the space of the party less including to religious individuals who hold dearly to their religious identities. This is a blind spot in the spaces that the parties create for members, either in meetings or social meetings.

5.5. An open but excluding culture.

The Norwegian political culture is an open civic participatory one, as in many liberal democracies. Despite its openness there are still cleavages showing forms of discrimination which persist and hinder the participation of non-majoritarian groups such as immigrants from participating politically. Political culture, just like other forms of culture can be limiting and has its own mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. When the question was put to informants about their reflections on the Norwegian political culture it was striking how they talked about language (Norwegian and political language) as a challenge, the way political parties does things and create politics and how difficult it would be to change these existing realities to accommodate those who are foreign to these organizational traditions and culture.

“Ja, this has been talked about in AP. The AP is known for the culture, we do it our way and that is our way and it’s hard to change it. When it comes to how the system works, how people are getting elected to different boards, locally and regions our congress and so on.” Henrick

Henrick points out that organizational culture seems to be strong and very difficult to influence or change. This could work as a barrier for people coming from outside Norway, who have a different political culture from their respective countries.

“I think it’s easier to have people also from like especially refugee background. People that might be very political but just don’t know the Norwegian political culture and language but still have so much hands on experience when it comes to organizing. They might not do that well in formalized meetings, but we can give them space for contributing” Olav.

The low understanding of the political culture and low Norwegian language skills are of sources of barriers, but Olav emphasized that parties should be more creative to allow immigrants, especially, to participate in different levels of a party outside formal meetings which require a dense cultural and language competence. Given the skills that some immigrants might possess, especially those who were political refugees, political parties would benefit, and this would in turn increase the participation of immigrants in political parties.

When Ali was asked about the political culture inside AP, he pointed out that it was too strong and based on local democracy. Hence making it difficult to have a coherent culture when it comes to working systematically to recruit people with minority background into the party in the different local chapters of the party. AP had done a study¹⁵ (AP Minoretetsutvalg) in 2021 to investigate how AP local chapters were dealing with diversity (mangfold) which Ali was involved in. He pointed out that;

“Unfortunately, no one worked on that [diversity]. It was a quite strange topic to work with because this is a political party, we just discuss politics. So, I think the culture is very different from place to place. I think if you start to be active in Oslo [...] I think you will meet quite a different party which thinks about inclusion and thinks about how to include you in the party and find you a place and how you can utilize your talents. When you come in as a new member, we just jump to find out who you are and how you can help the party [more welcoming] and how we can use you. I know this is a culture in some local branches and regions, I know that in some places it’s the same family or the same group of friends who has been in charge and has no other interest to include others”. Ali

In Ali’s example, inclusion of minorities is affected by the differences that exists between the party’s local chapters. Some local chapters may be more inclusive or exclusive than others. To a large extent the national leadership would have less control or influence over this, more so in a party rooted in a democratic structure where the lower structures have power to manage their local constituents. The lack of inclusion may also be a result of discriminatory attitudes held by influential native members at local levels. The networks of these members may make it difficult for anyone not aligned to them to feel included in the party. This would disproportionately affect immigrants who might be having a very thin social network in the community or constituency.

5.6. Professionalization of politics

The advancement of society and politics has resulted in a major shift from the “occasional” politician to the “vocational” politician (Weber, 1921).The professional politician not only lives

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https://res.cloudinary.com/arbeiderpartiet/image/upload/v1/ievy_filestore/8abf7550aded496da5de8be0976b09d44ff72ea8689645debe4afad1d32adfb7

for politics but lives of politics. Eliassen (1978) building on the foundation laid by Weber argues that one major development in the Norwegian context has been the importance of ‘skill’ and knowledge for assuming a legislative role in parliament. “Party loyalty, political experience and organizational activity...” are the main features in recruitment for political office (Eliassen, 1978, 192).

I quickly noticed a pattern in the bigger party meetings I observed during the study. The high level professionalization of the parties was evident in the way meetings were organized. Keeping of time for speakers was very strict and members were disciplined to stick to the agreed meeting procedures. There was no hackling or disruption of speakers who were on the podium by other members who might not be in agreement with their submissions. This to me was at a very high level and I liked it. I had experience where singing would be used in political meetings in political organizations, I was a member of to disrupt or cheer speakers. Members in the meetings I observed in both SV and AP were free from being disturbed by other members whilst making their presentations. I was equally fascinated by the composure of speakers, that is, body posture, tone of voice, which seemed very uniform. It seemed like the members had been trained from the same school of public speaking. It intrigued my mind and I wondered about those who fail to master this way of speaking. Would they even make it into the top of these parties? I pondered.

On the selection of candidates and leaders, political parties look for individuals that are eloquent (good in handling media) and electable. Karlsen and Narud (2013) add that political parties look for candidates that are eloquent (good in handling media) and electable. All the informants pointed to issue of eloquence in Norwegian as one of the major barriers and challenges for those with immigrant background, especially those who fail to eloquently master spoken Norwegian language. It is not enough to be sharp politically as a strategist without the ability to tackle media.

Political parties in Norway control the nomination process of candidates, however the selection is completely decentralized to the local party branches. Political party campaigns are therefore centered on the party rather than individual candidates (Karlsen & Narud, 2013). However, because of the constituency system political parties still prefer candidates who are well connected to the constituents to amass votes but also be responsive to the needs of the community.

The political party as a space has greatly changed from the inclusive integration phase. Olav who is in SV leadership was asked about how he thought about the party as a space for many to

engage in. He pointed out that it was important for the party to allow members *“to participate and contribute in a way outside of sitting in a local leadership or running for elections. This is how you create this base of activists that you can use.”*

He added that this could enhance those with poor Norwegian language skills (which is mainly refugees or immigrants) to contribute to the party. Olav *“contribute without mastering language because one way to learn the political language is by being in those areas/ spaces.”*

The building of a party that would embrace the different skill sets and aspirations of different members is indeed an old idea that was used in the left movement before. The biggest challenge in contemporary times is how best left parties can use the wide diversities that exist in constituencies to build stronger parties where diverse individuals are able to participate in party politics. Thanks to social democratic policies, the middle class has grown, and it is the class dominating left political parties.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have been able to present experiences of both immigrants and natives to understand the political culture of not only Norway but of political parties themselves and how that influences the participation of immigrants in political parties. Political culture has its own ways of including and excluding others. This is largely shaped by the social resources different groups of people possess. Education, good Norwegian language skills, especially verbal, is critical in politics. Those who might not possess such cultural resources would be excluded from participation. Bourdieu's understanding of the political habitus is interesting in analyzing immigrants' participation in a new political culture since they are new in the political habitus in an interesting and special position since they would need time to be accustomed to their new political culture. The field according to Bourdieu is relational. Thus issues of power features prominently as the dominant and dominated struggle to gain power over the social spaces (Pilario, 2009).

Chapter 6: Representation of immigrants in political parties

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I have established that political culture is essential in determining who gets to participate and be represented in political parties. Therefore, in this chapter, I explore how immigrant representation in political parties is talked about and what it means among the informants in this study. The chapter is organized in the following manner; First, a presentation of the different theoretical definitions of the concept of representation. Secondly, I go into the findings and analysis which is presented in three parts, namely, immigrant experiences of representation in parties, representation as a symbolic statement by political parties and lastly, representation as an important strategy for political parties to amass votes.

In this chapter I turn my attention to my findings on political representation of those with immigrant background in political parties. I use the intersectional theory to analyze how immigrant members perceive who they represent and how they are seen to represent, that is by their constituency and the parties. The chapter aims to answer the research question: what are the perceptions of informants on immigrant representation in political parties?

6.2. Theoretical conceptualization of representation

First, it is important to mention that presenting the two forms of representation [descriptive and substantive] is for broader understanding as I do not choose either of the two for analyzing my findings. But it does lay a foundation for the analysis. Representation is something that occurs when individuals are authorized to act and make decisions on behalf of others (Phillips, 1995). Representation is part and parcel of the organization of modern complex institutions, where power is bestowed through elections to a few individuals.

The first type of representation to look at is descriptive representation which relates to groups being represented by those they share the same identity with, for example women representing women and blacks representing blacks (Mansbridge, 1999). The shared experiences, feelings for group consciousness make it possible for representatives to represent people outside their formal geographic constituency because of certain identities such race, ethnicity or gender which are seen

to create a sense of solidarity and responsibility (Chambers, 2020). Anne Phillips (2010 cited in (Magnusdottir, 2016, p. 99) talked about the politics of embodiment which essentially denotes that “the interests of immigrants cannot be detached from the persons embodying that group”. According to Brown and Gershon (2017) the body is has many social constructions attached to it. And these meanings attached to the body are shaped by power. Therefore, those who are seen to be transgressing set out cultural or political norms tend to stand out for breaking the norm. The way immigrants are seen is important, first as different and not immediately associated with anything positive to occupy offices of power shows the difficulty the challenges of navigating between their identity and what they stand for.

The second type of representation is substantive representation, which does not look into the specific identity of the individual representative but the policy issues/or interests they are pursuing. Policy changes can be advanced with less representatives from the affected underrepresented groups as has happened with advances for women’s rights and rights for sexual minorities. The downside of descriptive representation is that it does not always lead to substantive representation for the specific groups. First and foremost because underrepresented groups are not homogenous, but also, they possess different experiences and interests. Therefore, it would be difficult to expect that their interests would be represented best by a few representatives sharing the same identity.

The contestation between substantive and descriptive representation has been a huge one. Pitkin (1967) suggests that it does not matter greatly who gets to represent who if the ideas and preferences are represented. Representation in her view is not about the representative, for example, being a woman, but rather about the representative capturing relatively accurately whatever ideas and preferences the women constituent has that relate to policies. Mansbridge (1999), however, argues that it can nonetheless be desirable for the legislature to resemble the population in relevant characteristics. Lazarova (2022) furthermore contend that the descriptive representation of immigrants in the political system such as a parliament is a good indicator of integration and democracy at work for liberal democracies.

In Norway the representation picture of immigrants and political representation is not a very good one. Out of the 169 members of the current national parliament only nine (9) have an immigrant background and only five (5) are born outside Norway [they represent 5.3 percent] (Iqbal, et al., 2021). This illustrates a gap in immigrant representation considering that there is about 16 percent

of Norwegians with immigrant background (see SSB, 2023). In the local government level, the situation is even more gloomy considering that immigrants do not need to be citizens to participate in local elections but only 3-year residence. According to SSB, 2022 report "there are 281 persons with immigrant background in Norwegian municipal councils after the local elections in 2019 (Kleven & Bergseteren, 2022, p.5). This comprised around 3 per cent of all municipal members". The report further shows that despite the poor immigrants' representation in local elections, both AP and SV have the highest number of representatives with immigrant background in municipalities. 38 and 14 percent respectively. The underrepresentation of immigrants may show that there are barriers that immigrants face coming into the political scene.

Representation in politics has been extensively studied in gender studies with regards to the participation of women. The scholarship developed within the study of gendered representation of women has extended to cover racial and ethnic minorities with a history of being oppressed and underrepresented (Sobolewska et al., 2018). The theoretical argument for women descriptive representation of women is that women representatives are instrumental in the advancement of policy issues that are of utmost importance to women (Phillips, 1995). In the same light as in theorizing around gendered representation, Saalfeld and Bischof (2013) contend that descriptive representation may contribute to substantive representation strengthening debates on issues that affected marginalized groups such as immigration policy and racial discrimination. In this chapter, I therefore discuss immigrants' representation by drawing insights from the great research reference on understanding representation of women. It is significant to note that for the purposes of this paper, I do not go into details about whether descriptive representation helps advance interests of immigrants, but I present and analyze the perceptions of informants on representation of immigrants.

6.3. Inclusion of a few with immigrant background to attract support and votes.

Representation of diverse groups and interests in politics is important for the legitimacy of a democratic political system. Even though immigrants assume citizenship of their new home countries over a given period, they remain lowly represented in politics in their new countries (Bergh & Bjørklund, 2010). In Norway gaining citizenship takes up to seven years. Both political

parties in this study have clear policies of inclusion for persons with minority background, meaning national minorities and ethnic minorities, including those with immigrant background. Diversity is seen as fundamental by both political parties for representation. SV party program of 2021-2025 (p. 63), states that the Norway has always been a diverse and intercultural society and will continue to be. Therefore, the party promises to work hard to fight all forms of racism and discrimination. Importantly, individuals with a minority background must be recruited into leadership positions. On the other hand, AP on its 2021-2025 (p. 102-103) program of the party promises to build an inclusive society notwithstanding gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. A party that was hit hard by the 22nd July 2011 terror attack, AP took as strong stand in the fight against racism in its party program.

The distribution of individuals in positions of power and influence must in the best possible way reflect the diversity that exists in society. However, practice may be far away from intentions. Political “party nomination serves as a choke point that will either close off entrants or, alternately, open up the pathway into politics” (Tolley, 2019: 70). Ethnic minority members might be shut out of these nomination committees because of party elites’ networks, outright discrimination, or social status (English, 2022) move this to party nominations. The nomination committees in the lower party structures are central to the selection of candidates. Because of the democratic structure of the parties, the national leadership has limited or no control over what the local structures do when selecting candidates for local leadership and local elections. The national leaders may only remind them about what things to consider in the nomination process, such as gender and diversity.

Olav mentioned that as party leadership they *“have tried to make sure that when our local committees look for candidates, they don’t only look at gender but also look at class and minorities. Because they are less represented, both of those groups internally.* In addition to his comment on diversity of candidates, it is important to note that there are various groups that are important to consider when looking at representation such as age, sexuality, disability. Intersectionality allows us to investigate the power and social structures that place some at a point advantage and others in disadvantage. The overlapping of these intersections of people’s identities and experiences has an influence on who gets to be represented in politics. Freidenvall (2016, p. 360) on political party candidate recruitment in Sweden concluded “there is a hierarchy of inequalities in which gender appears to be a much more accepted social category for inclusion in candidate selection than other

categories”. Other identities such as ethnicity and race are lagging behind in descriptive representation in many political parties. Although gender is high in the hierarchy of inequalities, racialized minorities, including immigrant women are lagging behind white women in political representation (Tolly, 2022).

Olav’s comment points to the power of the local party structures in determining candidates but also strong norms about diversity and representation that the local chapters are expected to adhere to. Besides the plea or reminder from party leadership to the local structures, there is no formal clear goal about how much representation should be achieved, which makes measuring this goal difficult. The national party leadership seems to be very open about diversity, but they need cooperation with the local structures where recruitment and candidate selection is centered to be able to achieve the goal of diversity in representation.

6.4. Perceptions of party members on representation of immigrants in parties.

In the Norwegian political system, like in any liberal democracy, political parties are key actors in recruiting, and fielding candidates for political office (Dancygier, 2014; Zapata-Barrero, 2017). The general perception of informants from this study is that political parties are not doing well in increasing diversity in representation.

Informants with immigrant background shared their feelings, thoughts and experiences about representation of immigrants in particular and ethnic minorities in general. For Abdul representation was crucial, as he explained, *“when you have a diverse society, you have to have a diverse parliament and diverse public officers who can understand correctly the concerns of the broader set of people.”* He continued to share his experience when he joined the party, *“I was promoted, not promoted but emhh I was given tasks because I represent minorities.”* The sentiment by Abdul is the same sentiments shared by Hamid *“They [the party] invited me to different activities and gave me a position [...] Because they felt that I had a good background. I was the only one that was with a minority background.”* Being given responsibility in the parties was influenced by the parties need to showcase that those with minority background are represented as per the parties’ visions.

In line with Mansbridge assertion, Abdul points out the importance of underrepresented groups to be on the table of decision making. He believes that the party gave him more responsibility because he “represented minorities”. His identity as an immigrant black man brings a different experience compared to the ethnic majority. In line with theories of intersectionality... Thus, representation by immigrants would enrich decision makers understanding of issues affecting immigrants. Abdul’s point is closely connected to what Salfeld & Bischof (2013) were referring to when they mentioned that descriptive representation was instrument in enhancing substantive representation. Political parties play the minority card very carefully when choosing candidates. One informant, Marwa, explained.

“People really want minority people to be in the lists but I know that it’s a huge discussion many places how high should that person should be...I have heard comments like “it’s important because we know that that kind of person with that kind of background for example the Pakistanis and the Pakistani community is very huge and the Kurdish minority is really huge” like often people are also put on that list because they also generate votes.”

Her interesting observation is that the parties are self-maximizing by incorporating those immigrant members as candidates in party lists. By self-maximizing political parties maintain their image of being open to diversity whilst at the same time carefully doing this to booster their support within ethic minority communities, especially within bigger minority groups in Norway. Therefore, those coming from smaller ethnic minority groups might not make it into those lists because they have less possibilities of attracting massive votes. Political parties tread between two difficult options either to have candidates with immigrant background and hopefully mobilize the immigrant vote (Bergh & Bjørklund, 2010). On the other hand parties fear a huge backlash that they may face from the native vote by placing an immigrant candidate high on the list (Portmann & Stojanović, 2019) who might not vote for the party because of that. A study from Switzerland on political parties of immigrant representation shows that in their drive to secure votes they shun away from placing immigrant candidates when they are certain that they would face a backlash (Nadler, 2021).

In Norway, it has not been clearly studied as to why native voters would discriminate against immigrant candidates. This discrimination raises interesting questions about trust/mistrust of immigrant by native voters. This could be due to cultural issues, strongly held negative stereotypes

against minorities or outright discrimination. In a study done in Switzerland, Green et al.,(2010 in Nadler, 2021) concluded that ‘culturally distinct’ immigrants invoked negative preferences from the majority natives. ‘Culturally distinct’ immigrants could be those who have different cultural beliefs, values, language, lifestyle from the main cultural attributes held by natives (Brunner, 2018, p. 324).

6.5. Perception of immigrant members on political parties’ diversity drive

Political parties are gatekeepers to political office in representative democracies such as Norway. However, they struggle to recruit and retain members with immigrant background to fill in the ‘diversity gap’ that persists. Although in principle they want to do more in terms of diversity, there is no clear or systematic way of dealing with the democracy gap, especially when it comes to recruitment and candidate placement.

“I don’t think we have any party in Norway who can say with honesty that they are trying enough and that they are doing enough.” And I think that especially that we are a multi-cultural society, immigrants and people with refugee background and any other backgrounds we are more and more people in Norway, and I think it’s a big democratic issue that we don’t recruit them, we don’t use them. and that we don’t actively listen to them like throughout the years, not only in election years.” Marwa

Marwa punched holes on political parties’ performance on poor recruitment and utilization of immigrants and other minorities in Norway. Norway is a multicultural society, when looking at multiculturalism as plural cultures existing in a given society. According to Benet-Martínez (2014), one of the key aspects of multiculturalism is the integration of minorities into the mainstream. Therefore, political parties have a central role in the integration of immigrants into the political system of their ‘new’ country. Benet-Martínez (2014) continues to argue that refugees are perceived in a different light either as a threat to the economy and culture of the majority. This could bring about challenges to their sense of belonging. This is partly because of the high politicization of immigration in many parts of the world including Norway. On the other hand, others see them as individuals needing humanitarian support. Besides being seen by the majority as a threat and a humanitarian case, refugees are a key resource that could be unleashed into the betterment of their new country with proper policy support. Their potential could be realized in

politics as well as Marwa rightly points out. Their skills, expertise and experiences would be of valuable assistance to political parties in Norway.

Political parties are also accused of placing many of those with immigrant background at the bottom of the party lists as candidates for election whereby there is a less chance of them getting a position. This places the immigrant candidates at a disadvantage as they fail to assume office Dancygier, et al., (2015) in their study on political parties in Sweden found out that party gatekeepers are the main factor influencing immigrants' political participation. Parties seemed very careful of placing candidates with immigrant background in top positions. At the same time the party benefits by tapping into their constituency to go out to vote for the party under the guise that they are voting for one of their own.

“And they are put down on lists, really down. And they know that it’s always down because they use them to generate votes. And I think that’s really bad because people are not stupid even though they might not have that language to tell. People are not stupid.” Marwa

The placing of immigrant members in party lists is motivated by the intention to lure voters, but they tend to be placed carefully where they will not be able to assume office. Givens and Maxwell (2012, p. 6) argue that elected ethnic minority politicians are seen as “powerless tokens chosen by parties for their symbolic value” to appease ethnic minority voters. This means that political parties want to have immigrant representatives in their lists primarily to satisfy voters with minority background.

A study done in the Netherlands on political parties and their relationship with party members who are muslim found that majority members feel threatened because immigrants might influence party agenda, program and the possible clientelism by immigrant members (Van den Dool, 2013 in Verkuyten, 2018). Therefore, they were not placed in positions of influence where they could dramatically influence changes in a given political party. What was mentioned by Marwa of placing candidates with immigrant background further down on candidate lists could be driven by the fear of influence and power inside political parties, therefore only a few make it as political party representatives or lack of belief in their skills.

6.6. Party elite networks and nomination committee's influence

Segaard and Saglie (2019) on their study of women representation at local level in Norway pointed out that the nomination committees have power and who sits in these committees influences who gets nominated as a candidate. A male dominated committee would likely nominate other men more. The argument pursued by Segaard and Saglie (2019) could be extended to the experiences of those with ethnic minority background. In a situation where there are a few minority members sitting in the committees, there may be less or no candidates with minority background. During the nomination there are competing interests such as political competence, gender balance, ethnic minority representation and winning elections.

Informal social networks within the parties are key in determining candidates to represent the party. When I questioned Paul about the role of networks in the work of an election committee he said *“in the nomination committees we know everyone who wants to be a nominee and wants to run for a candidacy, if there are people we don't know as the nomination committee it is easier for us to say no.”*

Elisabeth also pointed out the significance of social networking. *“Social networking is important. And you need to be social to meet other people.”*

Henrick emphasized that being known to the members of the nomination committee was essential for getting a position. *“If you want to get like high in the party. Like get elected or a leader position or role. The contacts, who you know and who you're with is definitely a big factor [...] it's a lot of like, if you know them and they know you are good, and they want you in that board...”* he said.

Knowing someone is not something that happens only inside formal party settings but could also be in different social gatherings where networks are formed. Some of these networks originated from early participation in the party such as from youth party membership. Immigrants who come as children might not have had the possibility to build these strong bonds and hence, they are being left with a thin network Soininen and Qvist (2021).

Henrick pointed to another dynamic which sets some apart from the rest, the role of family relations. *“Your family name definitely is [meaning important]. But of course, it will not be used against you if you don't have the right name. Let's say you are a daughter or son of someone who is /was active in AP [...] it's very easy to come into the party and people of course will know your*

father or uncle and so on". Some families could be classified as 'political' families because of their deep involvement in party politics in generations. Anyone coming from such a family would stand a better chance of being on the good side on the nomination committee and making it in the party. Thus, individual members coming from political families are in a better position to use their social capital to their benefit. And Bourdieu (1986) in his work on social capital noted that this may exacerbate social inequality. Immigrants unfortunately do not have such deep family connection with the new country. And in general, new immigrant members tend not to have these informal networks which the old guard in the parties have.

6.7. Symbolism of representation exhibited by parties.

In one meeting I was observing, I was fascinated to listen to a member of a political party nomination committee presenting in plenary that one of the candidates suggested by the nomination committee to the national congress for a national leadership position was going to be the "first ***[one of the bigger ethnic groups in Norway]. This is interesting in that despite the party not officially mapping membership according to ethnicity, when it serves the party ethnicity/race can be referred to, strengthening the party's self-image on diversity.

The question on representation of immigrants in Norwegian politics was put to Ali during an interview:

"Okay we live in[name of constituency withheld], and almost 20% of the people living here have a minority background. [...]. You know it's only symbolic, because I don't represent them, I represent everyone in *[name of constituency withheld], but only the 20% with the minority background, among those 20% you have 200 nationalities. I can't say I represent those nationalities. I represent all the citizens living in ***[...] But of course, it shows that we are reflecting the society we are living in.[...] Our goal for making these lists is to appeal to different groups and as many groups as possible because our thinking is that if we manage to do that, then we will represent the meaning of the people here in parliament."* Ali

Ali's assertion points to the symbolic meaning of having someone with a minority background in a party candidate list. The symbolism is that it is impossible for one or a few candidates in the list

to represent all the interests of minority groups represented in a constituency. Although knowing this limitation he adds the party goes ahead to have some candidates with immigrant background to appease these groups with the aim of representing the broader concerns of the people in the constituency. By appealing to different groups in a constituency parties need the constituents to amass votes and it is equally important for representatives if they are to stand a chance of re-election.

In the same light of competing interests between different groups, Hamid alluded to difficult expectations from his own ethnic community who expected him to help his group with things that are outside his political mandate, such as helping them get support from the Norwegian Welfare organization (NAV). Immigrants as a group are very diverse, representing them holistically as in Ali's case where he points out the ethnic diversities is not possible. In making the best out of such a difficult situation, the party line becomes a safer fall back for representatives as they navigate representing diverse and sometimes competing interests. And this must be exceptionally difficult for immigrant representatives as shown in Hamid's case who experienced pressure from his own ethnic group.

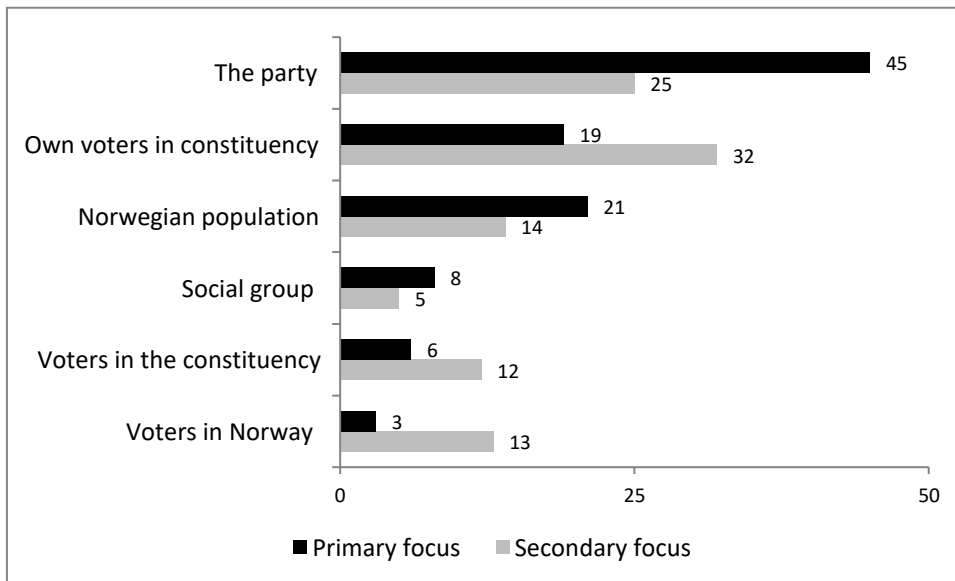


Figure 1: Representational Focus of MPs in 2013, N = 70

Q: There are different opinions about whom an elected member of parliament should primarily represent. What is your opinion? (Please rank all of the options in decreasing order of importance. You can do this by marking the most preferred as 1, the second most as 2, and so on – up to the number 5/6).

Source: The Norwegian Candidate Survey 2013 in (Heidar & Karlsen, 2018).

Given the competing interests in society, it is therefore not surprising that the study by Heidar and Karlsen (2018) concluded that political party interests ranked higher amongst party representatives and second were the Norwegian (general population) interests are more pronounced when it comes to representation of different interest groups in parliament. Political parties have powers over members in proportional representative system as they are the gatekeepers to a political career. The assertion by Ali that he represents everyone falls in line with the findings of Heidar and Karlsen (2018) in that as an immigrant himself he could only symbolically represent all the minority groups in his constituency or the effort to include diversity in the party. Therefore, he felt that he represented the broader interests for the constituents in parliament.

Ali's argument also shows the complex situation representatives with immigrant find themselves in, where they are seen as the exception, by minority (immigrant) communities, the party and the constituency (see also Saalfeld et al., 2011). Representatives with immigrant background are perceived by minority (immigrant) communities as representatives of their interests, even though this representation might be symbolic rather than on concrete political cases. This, however, does not take away the significance of descriptive representation in having democratically elected representatives who reflect the society they claim to represent (Phillips, 1998).

6.8. No to use quota to enhance with ethnic diversity?

The use of Quotas for women participation in Norway has made great strides in politics. AP use 40/60 percent of each Genders [male/female]. SV on the other hand strives for equal representation. (Magnusdottir, 2016) argues that the gender quota policy of Norway has not only been important for democracy but for bringing the experiences of women into where decisions are taken. The same approach could be argued to be beneficial towards ethnic minorities, whose experiences are needed at the decision-making table.

None of the political parties in Norway, including SV and AP use quota for minorities including immigrants to assume office. However, both SV and AP do mention in their organizational documents the importance of diversity (see SV and AP party programs 2021-2025). This is specifically interesting because gender is important in political parties. It is clearly stipulated how much representation both genders should have in leadership structures, however, ethnic minorities do not receive the same treatment. When Ali was asked about whether the party used quota for

immigrants, the specifically pointed out that “political skills” is the most important determining factor for assuming a position in the party. “Institutional mechanism that can ensure descriptive representation of minorities are representational quota, although such institutions are used more frequently in the case of ethnic minorities than for the incorporation of citizens with immigrant background (Hänni & Saalfeld, 2020).

“We [meaning the party] say no to quota based on skin colour. But we have quota for gender 40/60% of the other gender. It’s only that not when it comes to minority, because where are you going to start? The word minority means a lot of things [...] The idea of quota, I am thinking about the black minorities. We emphasize that political skills are the most important and also if the list you are making reflects the community.” Ali

The difficulty about providing a quota for minorities seems to be the criteria for defining minority. The two political parties in this study use the term minorities to cover a broad range of differences based on skin colour and ethnicity. Immigrants are bundled under the same category of minorities. Interestingly, skin colour cannot qualify for determining a quota for minorities for political representation yet one of the obvious markers between natives and minorities is skin colour.

The emphasis on quality over quantity by Ali is a shared sentiment in the discussion on having a quota for members with immigrant background. Lim (2017) sees the emphasis on “skills for selecting immigrants for positions” as a form of discrimination. It is problematic as it further stigmatizes those immigrants with limited skills. This talent-based discrimination unlike race, or gender, is not seen as discrimination yet it is responsible for producing harmful stereotypes.

Danny Pilario (2009) building on the work of Bourdieu argues that political competence is largely dependent on the economic, social and cultural capital one possesses. The professionalization of politics has made stringent entry requirements which many cannot meet. It is important to note that this does not only affect immigrants but also natives. The downside of the overemphasis on competence fails to take into account the inequalities that exist between different social groups. Immigrants are specially placed at a disadvantage in this regard. One of the significant disadvantages for immigrants as pointed out by informants was the mastering of Norwegian language. Without adequate Norwegian language skills, making it in politics in Norway is extremely challenging. Language acts as the first measure of competence especially in politics. Level of education, and the amount of time it takes to be engaged in politics are some of the issues

some informants pointed out which limits one's participation in politics [these are further discussed in the chapter on pathways into a party.

6.9. Conclusion

This chapter presented the perceptions of informants on representation of immigrants in political parties. Political parties as gatekeepers to a political career struggle with representation of ethnic minorities in general and immigrants. Political desire for more diversity in political parties is hampered by different issues. The intersection of multiple identities possessed by immigrants such as gender and race and or ethnicity, attitudes of political party elites, nomination committees, fear of voter backlash during elections for fielding candidates with immigrant background in top positions place immigrant members in a disadvantage position in party representation. The battle for more diversity is far from over as few immigrants occupy positions of influence in political parties.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by discussing the main research findings in relation to the research aims and questions. This qualitative research aimed to investigate and understand political participation of immigrants [with refugee background] in political parties in Norway. Two political parties were the center of focus; that is AP and SV. It also presents its contribution to the field of political participation, mainly from an intercultural understanding. This chapter includes a discussion of the main findings in relation to the relevant literature on representation, political culture, intersectionality, and social and cultural capital. The main research question was what are the experiences of immigrants' participation in political parties in Norway? There were three secondary questions intended to strengthen the main research question by firstly looking at the pathways of immigrants in political parties. Secondly, what are the perceptions of both immigrant and native party members on the political culture of Norway and its influence on political participation of immigrants? And thirdly, what are the perceptions of immigrant and native members on immigrant representation in political parties. The chapter lastly reviews the limitations

of the study, contributions of the research, proposes areas of focus for future research and a summary.

7.2. A political culture rooted on whiteness excludes the ‘other’

Political culture is like the heartbeat of any political system, from democracies to autocracies. Here I aim to respond to the research question, *what are the perceptions of informants on the political culture of Norway and its influence on political participation of immigrant?* Norway is one of the renowned democracies of the world, hence it wasn't surprising when my informants praised the open nature of the political system. Everyone who has with a legal stay was welcomed to participate. This sense of an open political culture was more pronounced by those who immigrant members who came as grown-ups to Norway. They had never lived in a democracy before setting foot in Norway. They could only dream of living democracy whilst campaigning for freedom and democracy in their home countries before being forced to flee persecution.

Political culture relates to the attitudes, feelings, perceptions, and common-sense habits that shapes how politics is done (Almond, 2000). Political culture is a product of socio-political imaginations of the nation. The imagination of Norway as homogenous nation produces a hierarchical relationship between the majority and minorities, the natives, and the different others (Gullestad, 2004). Some norms are explicit while other features are not explicitly stated. Based on the findings, therefore, I argue that political culture in Norway carries with it exclusionary elements experienced by non-white minorities in comparison to natives. There is a complex nature in the relationship between the national identity of Norway, which is perceived and exhibited as white and the power to govern this white homogenous state. Political parties have a central role in the political socialization of citizens and grooming political leaders. Their failure to attract and retain immigrants within their structures shows an excluding culture found both in society and in political parties. This exclusion seems to happen unconsciously as the parties want to do good based on their progressive ideas espoused in party documents on inclusion of minorities and broader diversity. Taking for granted the need to systematically work for the integration of immigrants in political parties could be interpreted as a form of exclusion.

Sipinen and Seikkula (2017) on their study on the influence of whiteness in the recruitment of candidates in political parties in Finland argue that whiteness influences the choice made by parties in selection of candidates to run for office. They found out that attitudes of whiteness dominate by ‘blaming the vulnerable for not having enough skills or poor native language efficiency. In a study by Van Trappen (2023) study on Flemish party elites in Belgium found out that indeed stereotypes against ethnic minorities affected the reluctance to select ethnic minorities as candidates. However, my findings do not show what Sipinen and Seikkula (2017) found out in Finland. My informants were certain that in the parties there was no blatant forms of discrimination because the parties strong zero tolerance to racism however such stereotypes existed outside, in the broader society. My research did not investigate the election committees, which is something I recommend later in the chapter as an exciting area for future research.

7.3. Finding the way into a party

Joining a political party is the first step into party politics in any democratic system. One of the research questions for this research was to *what are the pathways of immigrants into political parties?* Their way into political parties is as diverse as the immigration experiences of immigrants. A strong political ideology was a determining factor for some in joining a political party. Social issues such as just immigration policies, perceived discrimination of racialized others by the western world and broader local issues to where the informants were staying such as transportation, housing, and employment. The diversity of the issues that brought immigrants into politics debunks the preconception that immigrants are only concerned about immigration issues. Such misconceptions have a homogenizing and essentializing on interests that immigrants hold. When informants mentioned their current interests or policy issues in politics, I was amazed that they had different interests ranging from climate politics, international politics to local issues. Some of the informants pointed out that they have had experiences where other people especially natives quickly assume that they are interested in only immigration issues.

Findings one’s way into a political party calls for a social network to be at play. Those who joined the parties in their school days met their friends in school and started talking about the youth parties and that is how they ended up joining. Those who came as adults had very narrow pathways into politics thus decreasing their chances of being active party members compared to those who came

as children. This is partly due to poor Norwegian language skills and deeper social networks. Those who come as children have the possibility to socialize in Norwegian institutions such as educational institutions.

The case of Roberto is an interesting one as he was engaged in the struggles against the Pinochet regime upon arrival in Norway, he found a big community of individuals and organizations who were actively campaigning against the dictatorship in Chile. He naturally became part of the movement and within 2 years he found himself in a political party he has continuously served for the last thirty years.

Those immigrant members who had the courage and will to go out and join political parties on their own were already way ahead. They had the necessary cultural capital needed to understand party politics. They either had already been fighting against autocrats in their home countries or had family members (in this case parents) that were politically active before fleeing or had higher education. All these were the needed building blocks for a strong cultural capital which helped them in making that decision to join a political. The role of parents social capital on their children has been greatly studied after Bourdieu's work on its impact on education (Salinas, 2013). Parents have the same effect on their children's political attitudes and greatly influence their political outlook (Gidengil et al., 2016). The findings in this study are more interesting because a number of the informants were influenced by their parents who were socialized in a completely different political culture than that of Norway. But the cultural capital they amassed has become handy in the political lives in Norway. The family acts as a primary unit in socializing children into the political culture. It equally natures them with resources needed for building up their cultural capital. For example, the access and reading of political literature at home by Joseph as a young person empowered him with knowledge, he claimed to be helping him in his political life in Norway.

Joining political parties is not only a one way where the immigrants have to use their own initiative but the parties through their agents or members actively recruit members. This where political parties as organizations and institutions of democracies are vital.

7.3.1. The parties' shortcomings in recruitment of immigrants

Political parties are significant for the political participation of immigrants into a democratic political system despite their decline in membership over the last decades in Europe (Van Biezen, et al., 2012). They are gatekeepers into a launch of a political career, however, their role is less researched in comparison to ethnic minority associations (Soinen & Qvist, 2021). A significant finding by the study related to my finding is that when it comes to recruitment of immigrant members political parties are not doing well. Native members pointed out to that they did not have enough social spaces to meet with immigrant individuals and communities hence making their recruitment challenging. The native and immigrant communities seem to be segregated. The political parties mainly rely on urgency from immigrant members to join parties.

Informants who had a strong ideological desire or burning political issues easily found their way into a party. It is, however, important to note that even in this situation where informants had a strong desire for party politics, they still needed to talk to someone they knew to be a party member to be able to join. The story of Joseph who despite a strong political ideology needed to talk to one friendly co-worker who was an active party member to be able to find his way into a party. This illustrates the importance of interpersonal networks for individuals to participate in politics. What Putnam referred to as “bridging” networks (2000, p. 23). A study commissioned on political participation of migrants in Sweden concluded that informal social networks are an important factor for political participation, (Bivald et al, 2014).

One other observation to make from their study related to my finding is that when it comes to recruitment political parties' native members point out to that they do not meet with immigrant communities. The native and immigrant communities seem to be socially segregated. An insightful paper by Leighley and Matsubayashi (2009) used social network approach to look into the political integration /participation of minorities, in the USA. They argued that network formation is based on the principle of homophily meaning “the tendency of individuals to choose others like them as communication partners” (Leighley & Matsubayashi, 2009, p. 2). And this choice is compounded by individual factors such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, age education amongst others. The lack of overlapping networks between immigrants and native party members makes recruitment for

political parties challenging as there are less meeting spaces between immigrants and natives. Those who migrated as children would however have a better chance because of going to school in Norway which would help breach this gap. By growing up in Norway and attending school in Norway, they built social networks that strengthened their social capital. Those who joined the youth parties whilst going to school mentioned that they had contacts with native pupils who were already active in youth party politics which in turn helped access the youth party as well. Growing up in the country also helped socialize them into the Norwegian political culture.

Based on the findings of this study, political parties suffer from lack of innovation to be able to go out to meet immigrant communities to attract them into political parties. The open [come to us] approach by parties to individuals who want to join a party doesn't seem to give the best results given the low participation of immigrants. Political parties need to go to immigrant communities to entice them to be members. Or create spaces where the meeting of diverse identities would encourage interactions and networking. Political parties would need to devise strategies tailored to recruit members with immigrant background if they are to close the diversity gap existing within their ranks.

The study found out that immigrants as a group are not singled out and targeted by political parties for recruitment. One striking thing I found out is that the definition /operationalization of minorities is vague. In Norway there are five national minorities¹⁶ whose rights are clearly protected by law. I noted in this study is the use of the broad category of minorities by both political parties, which has the potential to blur the diversity that exists within ethnic minorities, such as race. Ethnic minorities in Norway cover a broad spectrum, children of immigrants born in Norway, immigrants who came as children, migrant workers, class and gender. Immigrants story is peculiar in that they are pushed away by a difficult security situation in their home countries and have to build a whole new life in the new country. Integrating in a new society, learning a new language, political system are unique challenges faced by those not born and raised in Norway. I argue that this presents a challenge for political parties in operationalizing ethnic minorities and working systematically to include them in the parties. The different ethnic groups have different challenges affecting their participation levels therefore they would need to be targeted and met differently by the parties. The lack of systematic categorization and documentation of non-white ethnic

¹⁶ kvener, jøder, skogfinner, romer og romanifolk

minorities in political parties presents a missed opportunity to understand and develop parties understanding and competencies to address the diversity gap currently existing political parties. The responsibility for diversity cannot be left to the individual immigrants alone. Political parties would need to devise strategies tailored to recruit members with immigrant background if they are to close the diversity gap existing within their ranks.

Political parties in Norway do not for example categorize membership based on race nor ethnicity. This on its own presents a challenge when it comes to measuring the output of a party's diversity drive. The lack of acknowledgement of skin colour/ race in Norwegian political parties makes it extremely challenging for non-white ethnic minority party members to organize themselves inside political parties. Could their organizing provide a platform for mobilization and engagement for non-white ethnic minorities in Norway? The experience of the black caucus in the UK labour party black sections is an interesting example whereby non-whites in the labour party organized to push their own agenda and pursue more inclusion of blacks in the party in the 1980's. The black sections became important for mobilizing non-white minority communities towards the party. However, the black sections were never formally incorporated into the party structures unlike youth and women structures. Despite the black sections losing the battle to be incorporated in the party structures, they won the battle of having the issue of low representation of non-white ethnic minorities in the party. For many political parties in Norway across political divide youth and women structures in political parties are instrumental in advancing more youth and women participation in politics. But the same energy is lacking when it comes to immigrants' participation and representation.

The immigrant member used to generate support.

When it comes to representation of immigrants in political parties, this study was able to find out that political parties use the identities embodied by immigrant members to garner support during elections by presenting a few as candidates. But also, it is important to showcase their ideological stance by including a few minorities in key positions. My informants mentioned that they felt welcomed into the parties, which can be interpreted as the parties needing them and this was surely beneficial to the members who felt welcomed.

Michon and Vermeulen, (2013) in their study of Moroccans and Turks in Amsterdam argued that political parties do not only recruit and welcome new members into parties but they also shut the door to others to protect their party images and ideological orientation. The anti-immigrant's rhetoric expressed in media does influence how political parties view immigrants and the risks they want to take to allow immigrant members to shine in political parties. Therefore, the numbers of immigrants who make it becomes extremely controlled.

Given a voter base that holds negative stereotypes against immigrants, political parties tread carefully to amass votes by adding a few immigrants on party lists to garner support whilst at the same time not wanting to lose support by fielding too many immigrant candidates. This is true for parties that are liberal towards immigration. Political parties may find themselves having to put some candidates in positions of power to be able to showcase they are striving for diversity and support a progressive vision for immigrant politics. The challenge with is when party structures and cultures that do not help ethnic minorities thrive in a party remain unchanged. Such coloured diversity can be viewed as tokenism, which has no aim of fundamentally addressing the foundations of the problem at hand (Sipinen & Seikkula, 2017, p. 470). Unfortunately, the situation today in Norway remains points towards a few decorated immigrants in the political scene.

Feeling welcome and personal development

Despite the low representation of immigrants in political parties the informants' experiences point towards parties that were welcoming to them once they joined the parties. The feeling of being welcomed has helped them to stay in the parties and become loyal members. Some of the informants have been active party members for 3 decades. Even the younger informants had a burning desire to continue with party politics. Personal development for informants is one thing they valued from their engagement in the parties. This came through the forms of training and being given responsibilities in the parties such as sitting in committees or in the local leadership. This was central for the development of skills and strengthening their capabilities as solid party members. Such development of skills contributes dearly to a stronger cultural capital. Equally important staying in the party allowed informants to widen their social networks and such networks are needed for assumption of a higher offices in the parties.

It is important to note that there are some positive developments in the representation of immigrants in political parties or at least in SV. Whilst I was in the process of writing this thesis a historic event happened with SV, one of the parties I am studying in this thesis, when Mariam Hussein was elected as SV's Deputy President (Nestleder) (Knežević, 2023). Hussein has an immigrant background having come to Norway as a child from Somalia. She is the first refugee in Norway to occupy such a high position in a political party. This is a positive step for ethnic diversity in SV and would likely influence other political parties to allow immigrants and other minorities to lead.

Another beautiful story of an immigrant with refugee background occupying a powerful political position is that of AP member, Masud Gharakhani, who is the parliament's president (stortingspresident) since 2021 (Pedja Kalajdzic et al., 2021). Just like Hussein he came to Norway as a refugee child with his family. Despite assuming the position after a sudden turn of events whereby the then parliament president, Eva Kristen Hansen was forced to resign because of the scandal. Gharakhani's ascension to the office has been hailed as a success story for diversity in AP. Despite these success stories, the journey towards better representation of immigrants is a long way to go.

7.4. Why is representation low?

The third research question for this research was *what are the perceptions of immigrant and native members on immigrant representation in political parties?* Here there was agreement from both natives and immigrant informants that representation of immigrants in political parties was low. In answering this question, I discuss the issues that were raised by informants which hinder full participation of immigrants in political parties. The issues I focus on are limited Norwegian skills, digital hate and professionalization of politics intersecting identities immigrants possess which all meet in the space of a party.

7.4.1. Norwegian language as a barrier for participation

Language is one of the main issues that informants pointed to in describing barriers to immigrant participation in political parties. Political parties in Norway use Norwegian language as the

medium of communication. Therefore, for immigrants with limited language skills this becomes extremely challenging. Coupled with the professionalization of politics, political language in itself has advanced such that basic understanding of Norwegian language on its own without a vocabulary for sophisticated political language is not enough. Language is a powerful form of social capital that those who are not born in Norway may struggle with. The development of political language necessary for party politics is deeply part of the resources amassed either from family and or through formal education. It is not a big surprise that all the informants had higher education and all native members had been active in the party from their youth days which helped them amass this key cultural capital.

In the meeting of SV (Sosialisme på norsk), I noticed that there was simultaneous translation of the speeches to sign language. When I asked some around from participants, they told me it has been a norm for SV to have sign language translation in important national meetings. The issue of Norwegian language is an interesting one as it is one of the main barriers for participation of immigrants which my informants highlighted over and over. Many researchers have found it to be a barrier as well. Interestingly, it seems to be an issue that no political party wants to tackle and be creative to include even those with low Norwegian competence. I do not think it is an issue that should be left unattended since it excludes those who might not be good enough in Norwegian. In the recent past some local party chapters¹⁷ have been in the past experimented with translating party programs for local elections into several languages [those spoken by the larger immigrant communities] to increase voter participation. Such creatives could also be multiplied to include internal party documents that could be accessible in several languages. Political parties can be spaces for people with different sets of skills and cultural capital if they provide multiple ways for people to be involved instead of only relying on written and oral language skills.

7.4.2. Professionalization of politics and demand for competence

Political parties have transformed over the years to be highly professional and elite organizations, whereby competence and skills are a prerequisite for party leaders. Bourdieu in Reed-Danahay in his work on education argued that elite institutions such as universities have the power to “shape national identity and contribute to the processes of centralization, unification, and standardization”

¹⁷ <https://www.kommunal-rapport.no/politikk/sv-oversetter-partiprogrammene/60421/>

(2017, p.14). His conclusion could be expanded to political parties, who are elite organizations with a key role in socializing members into politics and the parties themselves as organizations. The process of socializing individuals is linked with the professionalization in a party whereby members are socialized to articulate themselves in a certain way. I was fascinated when observing party meetings how everyone talked in almost the same way [tone of voice, body language] in party meetings. To me it exemplified the epitome of party integration into the political culture. There seemed to be no space for diversity in highly professionalized parties.

The professionalization of politics is closely linked with the high demand of political competence for political candidates. Political competence is one of the key features political parties look for when searching for candidates. Pillario, argued that the professionalization of politics demands “necessary competence in terms of specific knowledge, mastery of a certain type of rhetoric, material resources and a profession of faith to the values...” (2009, p. 87). Social status, educational background and generally cultural capital which can be illustrated in political language one uses as I noted in the meetings I observed for this study.

On the findings of this study, it was clear that for the political parties skills and competence for anyone willing to run as a party candidate was essential. Higher education, amount of time spent in a party, a wide social network, and cultural capital, which includes Norwegian language and political language, are all key to be active in a political party. Competence on its own is not a problem when the playing field is level. However, it becomes problematic when individuals from different background (social, economic) are judged by the same rules such as immigrants and the poor. “The political exclusion of (a large part of) the lower classes must be seen, then, as the combined effects of lack of resources, a certain political habitus and the institutions and culture of politics” (Harits, 2017, p.26). Harits (2017) goes on to argue that exclusion plays itself out in the political field though emphasis on competence. This is the case with political parties as professionalized and elite organizations.

The competition for candidates in political parties is very intense meaning that immigrants have to undergo the very same stringent party procedures as the rest of the party members. This to a larger extent disadvantages and excludes a bigger number of immigrant members who might not

have the necessary political and social resources that someone who grew up in the party youth structures might have for example. All the informants with immigrant background who came as children had been active in the youth party structures. Soinnen and Qvist (2017, p. 567) in their study of political parties found out that such strong networks developed in youth parties are key determining a political career path and that such ties “can have an excluding effect” especially towards immigrants who would joining a party as outsiders.

The emphasis on competence in the selection of candidates can be linked to meritocracy, which according to Michael Sandel (2020), an American philosopher, is a system of rule, a way of allocating income and wealth and power and prestige. Education and experience are at the benchmarks for allocating opportunities. This is in line with a study by (Gallego, 2007) in a study of participation in Europe found out that education and income increases the probability of individuals to work for political parties. Meritocracy has dominated almost every form of modern organizations. The challenge with it is that many of those who are said not to be competent are left behind with less opportunities. They take the blame for not working hard enough. The challenge of “that the adverse psychological effects on those who are taken to be lacking in merit, in a society where meritocratic discourse prevails, have political consequences” (Bukodi, 2021, p.7).

Individuals who are seen to be lacking skills are likely feel not worthy to play a part in the political system. The emphasis on meritocracy fails to consider existing inequalities based on gender, class race and ethnicity. This is even more problematic for immigrant communities who might possess a completely different culture than the main culture. Immigrants who might struggle to master the oratory of their new country might struggle to make it in politics. In this research it became very clear that to be engaged in politics, education was key as all informants had higher education. Meritocracy advances elitism, thus widening the inequalities existing in society. In relation to this study, those who do not have the needed skills are pushed further away from political decision making by non-participating in political parties.

7.4.3. Intersecting identities of immigrants

Immigrant members struggle with their identity in terms of who they represent especially in a constituency and party system such as the one of Norway. They are expected to represent the

constituency and party but at the same time their immigrant communities look up to them as their representatives. I argue that immigrant members are very much aware of their identities and how their intersection shapes issues they may take up. Issues around racism, or immigration politics are often carefully avoided by most immigrant politicians in fear of a perceived backlash from the majority and importantly from a party position. Especially when the party's position is against making immigration conditions better, as in the example I made earlier about a parliamentary vote on immigration in parliament (see Phillips et al., 2022).

In as much as the political parties studied are perceived as welcoming to immigrant members, the identities immigrants come with to a political party makes them unique especially how they are seen and what they are perceived to represent. For example, how they are perceived by the ethnic majority that they are all occupied with only immigration issues. They are seen as different, a part of the party but at the same time as outsiders. These identities do not only affect the individual members, but political parties are affected too. For example, the two political parties in the study want to be seen as inclusive, meaning they do want to see people with immigrant background in the parties. However, they do not want a quota system which would ensure that they are guaranteed representation in the party. Party membership is not categorized by skin colour although it is appreciated when parties refer to the need for diversity. Political parties also crave for the immigrant vote, which is easily enticed when immigrant candidates are presented in party lists. All these show the complex nature of the interactions of multiple identities existing in the space of a political party.

7.4.4. Discrimination and digital hate

One of the most central questions in political participation research is trying to understand why people with immigrant background are underrepresented both in political parties and as representatives in public offices? There is the supply and demand sides when looking at this issue. The supply side is compounded by the situation of the immigrants themselves, such as lack of willingness to dare to be a candidate, lack of time to be in politics, childbearing, pressure from ethnic groups. The demand side is based on the political party elites and the electorates willingness to have ethnic minorities as their representatives. Discrimination and racialized politics plays a big

part on the demand side (Givens & Maxwell, 2012). The literature on sense of belonging for immigrants presents that “more exposure to the receiving society is generally associated with stronger identification with and attachment to it” (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007) . On the other hand, discrimination tends to lead to the opposite whereby immigrants lose a sense of belonging to the new nation. Despite informants’ background showing a positive image about being welcomed with open arms and given the possibility for self-development in the political parties. The society is not that welcoming. The political scene is one of the spaces for ‘whites’ therefore racialized others are not easily welcomed into that space. The finding on digital hate against party members with immigrant background illustrates the complexity of a political system espousing an open political culture where all may participate whilst at the same time it possesses ways to exclude others in the manner they are treated.

Digital hate just like other forms of discrimination disproportionately affects ethnic minorities, and women the most. This has severe psychological consequences on the individuals affected. It may result in self-censorship and shying away from political participation. Dealing with digital hate is not an easy endeavor according to deal with for survivors (Magarray, 2014). However, political parties need to develop mechanisms to assist ethnic minority members who might face digital and physical hate because of doing political party work. These solutions can be individually tailored to assist members with therapy and tools for surviving hate. Other mechanisms could focus on structural issues such as litigation against individuals who perpetuate hate using the `Hate Crime Act of Norway`. Political parties can use this to send a clear message that any individual who goes against their member using hate would face a strong defense from the party. This would go a long way in protecting ethnic minority members and in the long-term shape society towards more tolerance and less discrimination. The political playing field, in relation to discrimination would be level for all to feel free to participate without fear of hate.

7.5. Contribution of this thesis

This thesis is a contribution to understanding of intercultural issues at play on immigrant’s participation in political parties. As the two political parties strive to increase their support base amongst immigrant communities, therefore, the contribution of this thesis is important in increasing the intercultural competence of political party leaders and recruiters to be able to meet

both aspiring and new immigrant members with a better understanding. That would be a win-win for both parties and immigrants who want to engage themselves in politics. Social networks, social and cultural capital are some of the key aspects of immigrants' pathways into political parties. Parties may also benefit from changing their organizational cultural spaces to be a very open space of interaction for different cultures, experiences and identities that meet in political parties. For example, parties would have to think about the best possible ways to make party structures flexible enough to allow immigrants who have a thin network, social and cultural capital to participate in parties which would in return increase immigrants' capabilities to fully participate in party politics. Welcoming and accommodating minorities does not mean the total loss for the majority, but that they should be sensitive enough to create a space where everyone feels welcome and accepted and strengthen the parties.

Both political parties are very clearly against discrimination in their policies. However, I found out that there were no clear routines or mechanism to help immigrant members when they face discrimination (including digital hate speech) from the public. This is a shortcoming of the parties since the individual members do face digital hate because of their official duties in serving the parties. Facing discrimination has psychological implications which need to be taken care of. Therefore, mechanisms of support are needed not only for those serving at national level but also those serving at a local level.

Competence which emphasizes the importance of skills is one key determining factor for the parties' nomination committees in selecting party candidates. However, the over reliance on competence tends to exclude those with immigrant background, who grew up in a different political culture. It is important to reiterate what Putnam mentioned, that those with limited social capital have a limited possibility to participate in politics. Equally the lack of cultural capital must not be used to strengthen existing hierarchies in society. Immigrants who might have possess other resources outside what is seen as competent skills for Norwegian political culture could still dearly contribute to party politics when offered the space and opportunity to do so. To narrow the diversity gap, political parties need to look beyond competence and look at the value of descriptive representation in politics.

I conclude this section by looking into my fellow immigrant members who are at a position of advantage to advance even more inclusive policies, structures and in the political parties. These are the courageous few who have made it into political parties need not only bask in the glory of being the only few who have made it into elite political organizations. Their experience would be valuable in building the necessary bridges for immigrants to join political parties. Lastly, this research was conducted in Norway and in two political parties, hence I do not make claims of generalizability to other countries or even other parties in Norway.

7.6. Future research

The study focused on only two political parties; hence it would be more interesting to have a bigger research project looking at immigrant experiences in all political parties represented in the Norwegian parliament. That would increase the scope of the study and be able to map and understand the geographical differences that might exist in stereotypes held against immigrants.

Political parties operate within the realm of an existing socio-political culture, it would be therefore, enriching to the field to investigate how whiteness plays itself out in political parties and how it affects participation and or representation of immigrants in political parties. The biggest question for the future is if political parties are able to embrace the increasing cultural diversities and ethnicities in an attempt to create resilient and dynamic political cultures able to accommodate those who want to be party members.

This research did not investigate the gender aspects of representation of immigrant women due to the limit of scope and time. Especially, the intersection of gender race and ethnicity and how it plays itself out in the space of political parties. It would be interesting for future research to look into gender and its influence on representation of immigrant women or men. The study has been able to point out to one of the challenges that immigrants face such as digital hate, which tends to be harsher to women and racialized others. Another observation for future research is the power and influence of nomination committees. For further studies it would be informative to investigate how nomination committees operate and understand how they view diversity as a criterion for selecting candidates. In conclusion the study of participation of immigrants is far from being full understood and a multidisciplinary approach is necessary.

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Appendix

Norsk senter for forskningsdata (NSD) information letter and consent form

Request for taking part in this research project

Title of research project: Political participation of immigrants with refugee background in political parties in Norway.

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to understand the experiences of immigrants with refugee background inside political parties in Norway. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The aim of the project is to understand the participation of immigrants with refugee background in political parties in Norway. The project is part of the fulfillment of Master thesis in intercultural studies at NLA university college. The project will also result in the writing of a published academic article.

The main research question of the study is; what are the experiences of immigrants participation in political parties in Norway? Equally important secondary questions to be tackled are; what the barriers and incentives to political participation of immigrants inside political parties? And lastly which strategies immigrants employ to manoeuvre in political parties?

Who is responsible for the research project?

NLA University college is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

Participants for this project will be active members of political parties and purposive sampling will be used to identify the participants. 12 participants are targeted for this project. All participants will be over 18 years of age.

What does participation involve for you?

- If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you partake in a one-on-one semi structured interview. It will take between 40-60 minutes. The survey interview questions shall be about your experiences in your political party with regards to party members with immigrant background. Your answers will be safely recorded electronically and by paper by the researcher taking notes.

- I will also use observation of some party meetings and notes will be taken during the observation of these activities.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary.

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

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

- The researcher and project supervisor are the only ones to have access to personal data.
- I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data, I will store the data on a research server, locked away and encrypted.

If applicable, indicate:

- Netskjema data processor that will collect/work with/store data, gathered during the interviews or transcription service

Participants will not be identifiable in this research except those who are leaders of the political parties, as they talk on the official capacity of the parties. For party leaders, only name and position in the party might be identifiable data.

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

The project is scheduled to end 01 June 2024. Personal data will be deleted at the end of the project.

Your rights

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

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with *NLA University college*, Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

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

- NLA University college via Hilde Danielsen, by email: Hilde.Danielsen@nla.no or by telephone: +47 55 5407 76.

- Our Data Protection Officer: Inger-Johane Gamlem Njau, by email: Inger-Johanne.Njau@nla.no or by telephone: +4755540749
- Data Protection Services, by email: (personvermtjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,

Hilde Danielsen
Project Leader
(Researcher/supervisor)

Student (if applicable)

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project “Political participation of immigrants with refugee background in political parties in Norway” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in (*an interview*)
- to participate in (*participant observation*) – *if applicable*
- for information about me/myself to be published in a way that I can be recognised (describe in more detail)– if applicable*
- for my personal data to be stored after the end of the project for (insert purpose of storage e.g. follow-up studies) – if applicable*

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 01 June 2024.

(Signed by participant, date)

Interview Guides

1. Interview guide for immigrant members

Introducing myself

Full Names

Title: Student

I am doing this project as a fulfillment of my academic requirements for Masters in Intercultural Studies at NLA. The aim of the project is to understand the participation of immigrants with refugee background in political parties in Norway.

N.B; introduction section for all 3 guides.

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Demographic/personal information

Age group:

When did you come to Norway?

Marriage status or living together with a partner or divorced.

Number of children

Level of education

Employment status

Being in the party

For how long have you been a member of the party?

Would you tell me what motivated you to join the party? How did you come to know about the party? Through friends, social media, and recruitment.

And what inspired you to stay in the party?

Tell me about any obstacles to staying in the party?

Have you felt excluded in the party? And if yes, please tell me how?

What was your experience coming in as a new member in the party and how were you received by other party members?

Which positions have you held in the party if any? If any, what was your experience taking a position for the first time?

Do you think money plays a role in mobility within the party? And please explain how.

What role if any does a strong social network within the party play in mobility of members? And please explain how?

How have you been able to rise within the party? Tell me more about challenges and incentives using examples.

And what are your future aspirations inside the party?

What are your observations on the party's ability to recruit, and retain members with immigrant backgrounds, both men and women?

How do you perceive or see the Norwegian political culture?

Civil society engagement

Are you a member of a trade union? And are you active in your union?

Are there any other civil society organizations you are active in?

Policy issues

What issues (political/policy) are more pertinent to you? For example, international politics, immigration, education amongst others.

What policy issues have you been able to pursue inside the party to a point where they become the party's policy.

Which issues are members with an immigrant background concerned about in the party?

Political engagement in the country of origin.

Were you politically engaged/ active in your home country before coming to Norway?

Are you politically engaged /active in politics in your country?

.....

2. Interview guide for native members

Demographic/personal information.

Age group.

Marriage status or living together with a partner or divorced.

Number of children.

Level of education.

Employment status.

Personal experience on intercultural issues

Could you please tell me about how the party integrates members with immigrant background

How do individual members receive new members with immigrant members?

Is language and different political cultures affect relations between native and members with immigrant background?

What is your experience or observation with cultural issues when native and members with immigrant background meet in the party? Cultural issues are; race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality.

What role, if any, does a strong social network within the party play in mobility of members? And please explain how?

Tell me what you think about members with immigrant background occupying top leadership positions in the party.

Tell me what you think about members with immigrant background not occupying any leadership positions.

Have you felt excluded in the party? And if yes please tell me how?

Conclusion of the interview

Is there anything more you would like to add as we conclude our interview?

Conclude the interview by thanking the respondent for their responses and time.

.....

3.Interview guide for party leadership

Questions

How does the party recruit, retain and train members with immigrant background? Is gender a factor in these issues?

Is there a special treatment for members with immigrant background?

Would you say something about the party's policy on equality and diversity? Either for election of public office candidates or for positions inside the party.

What role if any does a strong social network within the party play in mobility of members? And please explain how?

How does the party address racism?

Tell me about policy issues that immigrants pursue in the party?

Conclusion of the interview

Is there anything more you would like to add as we conclude our interview?

Conclude the interview by thanking the respondent for their responses and time.

.....

Tables

PERSONAL INFORMATION- Immigrant members							
	Age for coming to Norway	Age now	Sex	Age of joining the party	Number of children	Marriage status	Education
1.Ali	10	36	M	18	3	Married	Tertiary
2.Marwa	8	30	F	16	0	Not married but living with a partner-(engaged)	Tertiary
3.Hamid	22	47	M	43	6	Married	Tertiary
4.Roberto	24	60	M	28	3 (grown up)	Married	Tertiary
5.Abdul	20	50	M	26 (had a break when children were smaller)	3 (grown up)	Married	Tertiary
6. Ema	30	58	F	33	2 (grown up)	Married	Tertiary
7. Joseph	25	50	M	25	1 (grown up)	Married	Tertiary
8. Kumar	4	35	M	19	4	Married	Tertiary
PERSONAL INFORMATION- Native members							
1. Maria		39	F	18	0	Single	Tertiary
2. Paul		40	M	25 (active the last 7 years)	0	Single	Tertiary
3. Elisabeth		30	F	3	0	Single	Tertiary
4. Henrick		24	M	9	0	Single	Tertiary (student)

Table 1: Personal information of informants [natives and immigrants]

	Path to the party	Family involvement in politics in home country	Trade union membership	Civil society engagement	Political engagement in home country	Key issues when joining	Key issues when Now
1.Ali	Recruited	Yes (political refugees) and parents father joined a party shortly after coming to Norway	Yes, but not active	No	No	"local issues; cheaper bus, cheaper train, cheaper cinema tickets and more cultural activities for youth."	Environment, clean cheap energy, education and social welfare
2.Marwa	Personal conviction	Yes (political refugees)	Yes but not active	No	No	Discrimination of Muslims (arab spring) and racism linked with personal identity crisi	International politics; welfare state and economic politics
3.Hamid	Personal conviction	No	Yes but not active	Yes	Not before fleeing.Now to a lesser extent as a commentator	Family politics, intergration and jobs	*Same as when he came in
4.Roberto	recruited	Yes in home country	Yes and very active	Yes	Very engaged before fleeing. And brutalized by the regime.Not anymore. But was heavily engaged the first years in	Ideology (socialism); international solidarity, freedom. SV supported the fight against dictatorship in Chile	Green economy, ideology
5.Abdul	Both (recruited & took initiative)	No	Yes and very active	No, because of work	Yes, before coming to Norway	Racism and Xenophobia	Protecting the environment and Peace
6.Joseph	Recruited	Yes in home country	Yes, not active	Yes	Engaged before flying (even got arrested)	Ideology (socialism);Immigration politics, international solidarity, justice, children and youth	International politics, justice, immigration
7.Kumar	Not recruited, read party program before election then decided to join	Yes in home country	Yes, not active	Yes	Yes engaged in himan rights and political work in the Gulf	Ideology (social democracy); Health, education	Building a stronger AP
8. Ema	Not recruited	No	Yes,		No	Immigration politics, international solidarity	Climate politics, education, economic equality

Table 2: immigrant informants pathways into parties