"Rarely we see them for all that they do":
Examining the Civic Participation of Immigrant Women in Norway

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Abstract

Often immigrant women are assumed to be politically apathetic due to statistically lower rates of involvement in traditional political participation strategies. These measurements neglect the different strategies immigrant women may utilize to influence positive change, such as of civic participation. This thesis explores the strategies and arenas of civic participation immigrant women in Norway use as well as the accessibility and appeal of civic and alternative forms of participation to immigrant women.

This was a qualitative, interpretive phenomenological study utilizing six semi-structured interviews. The participants were immigrant women who were involved in the community. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and identify codes and themes.

This study found that participants were involved in the community in many ways, including participating in NGOs with social justice aims, the neighborhood, in dugnad, and more. Their insights also revealed more informal strategies of participation, such as personal interactions to challenge stereotypes and racism. Experiences of marginalization influence the type and aim of participation. Participants' involvement was constrained by factors applying particularly to their intersecting identities, such as unfamiliar and exclusionary social codes and organizational power imbalances. As immigrant women, they also felt they were seen as victims and not recognized for their competences.

The way in which participants persisted despite barriers to affect change represents a potential for empowerment in civic engagement. Many participants held transformative aims and saw civic participation as a valuable arena to this purpose. However, the conception of active citizenship reveals the normative values inherent in valorizing high levels of participation. Immigrant women in particular are pressured to perform their belonging through acts of contribution to the community without recognition of the barriers they face. Valuable participation is defined by the dominant society, and dominant spaces that reproduce hierarchies and constrain possibilities for truly transformative change are privileged. This study concludes that while civic participation holds a potential for empowerment, it must be evaluated contextually, and the participation of immigrant women in informal arenas should be further explored and uncovered.

Key Words: *immigrant women, civic participation, citizen participation, active citizenship, empowerment, Norway, political participation.*

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

Throughout the last decade, there have been increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees arriving in Europe. European states have had to grapple with and rethink migration policies to cope with the increasing numbers of immigrants who are looking to integrate, be involved and have a voice in their new countries (Brochmann et al., 2013; Hochschild & Mollenkopf, 2011). The rights of immigrants have become an extremely controversial and polarizing issue in politics and society, and immigrants are often politically marginalized (Koopmans et al., 2012). For immigrants to become integrated into their new host countries, they must be properly represented and have a political voice to ensure their particular needs are met.

Studies investigating the political participation of immigrants and women describe declining levels of voting and running for office (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 273). However, alternative forms of political participation and civic engagement are increasingly used by immigrants (Zani & Barrett, 2012). Ways of citizenship participation are influenced by the experiences of marginalization immigrants and immigrant women face (Wood, 2013; Zani & Barrett, 2012). Civic participation is broadly defined as any "voluntary activity focused on helping others, achieving a public good or solving a community problem, including work undertaken either alone or in cooperation with others in order to effect change" (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 274). This includes membership in community organizations, church organizations, collecting money for charity, helping neighbors and boycotting (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 274). These alternative forms of participation and numerous others are not always visible and are not often studied, obscuring the ability of researchers to accurately judge the political engagement of immigrants and the governments' responsiveness.

In addition to the general political marginalization of immigrants, immigrant women form a group that faces more than one form of marginalization from their identities as women and immigrants. Immigrant women have particular needs that may not be encompassed within the representation of women or male immigrants. Their status as women can present further barriers to participation, such as different gender norms governing women's public life and their combined identities can affect how they are perceived through the dominant culture's stereotypes about immigrant women (and particularly Muslim women).

1.2 Context and Definitions

This study examines the participation of immigrant women in Norway. In Norway, there is much emphasis on the importance of civic participation and voluntary associations, which is significant in terms of the platforms and arenas available for the participation of immigrant women. It is very common and expected to be involved civically and to contribute to the community in some way.

Dugnad: Concepts like dugnad emphasize the importance that everyone participates. Dugnad is broadly defined as voluntary work done by a community or collective (Simon & Mobekk, 2019, pp. 817-818). This participation can be as part of a neighborhood, where the residents organize a day to rake leaves or as part of a school, or organization, where one might participate in a bake sale or do maintenance for the building (Simon & Mobekk, 2019). Participation in dugnad can be considered mandatory, and often presents a choice between participating by doing the task or providing a financial contribution instead.[1]

Janteloven: Janteloven or "The Law of Jante" is another important concept important to the Norwegian and Nordic context in general that has implications for the integration and participation of immigrants. It originally comes from the 1933 literary work by Aksel Sandemose, in which Janteloven is a concept that satirizes attitudes promoting homogeneity, with tenets such as "*You shall not believe you are better than us*" (Trotter, 2015). However, Janteloven is often used colloquially to refer to a social code that asserts that one should blend in and conform to the group, and that everyone is the same (and equal). In this way, the social, cultural and visible differences of immigrants can be viewed as breaking social codes that encourage conforming and assimilation. It is crucial to pay attention to agency when analyzing the concept of Janteloven; it cannot act by itself as a concept but is often used as a disciplining tool by the powerful and applies unevenly to the population (Trotter, 2015). This concept, relevant to the immigrant experience of participation and belonging in the Norwegian context, will be discussed in this study.

Immigrant/Migrant Terminology: The terms migrant and immigrant are used somewhat interchangeably in this study. I utilize the term immigrant most often because my participants fit into this category. The participants used both terms to refer to the same group. Some of the relevant literature uses the term migrant rather than immigrant. Where participants and literature use the

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[1] This statement is based on the author's personal discussions with a Norwegian colleague.

term migrant, I have used this term. Additionally, while my primary focus is on immigrant women, I also refer to immigrants as a general category where it is relevant.

1.3 Purpose and Relevance

This project will seek to identify the different arenas and platforms that are used by immigrant women to participate in political and civic life. Immigrant women are sometimes considered to be apolitical and exploring alternative methods of political participation will reveal the alternative ways that they are politically engaged. It will also explore their experiences with civic participation and the meanings they bring to their participation, and discuss the normative values placed on immigrants to prove their belonging in Norway and in the public sphere.

1.4 Research Questions

The main research question of this study is the following:

- What strategies alternative to traditional means of political participation do immigrant women in Norway use to participate in politics and civic life and what arenas and platforms do they use?

The following sub-questions will be explored:

- How accessible are opportunities to be civically and politically active in non-traditional ways to immigrant woman?
- What makes non-traditional forms of political and civic participation more appealing to immigrant women than traditional forms of participation?

1.5 Outline

This thesis is organized into eight chapters. The introduction is followed by a literature review and an overview of the relevant theoretical concepts utilized in this project. The fourth chapter details the methods, research design and ethical principles of this study. Chapters Five and Six provides the empirical findings, which are then discussed in Chapter Seven. The final chapter, Chapter Eight, presents key conclusions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Focused empirical and theoretical review of relevant literature

Political and Civic Participation: Several studies of immigrant involvement in politics (Martiniello, 2006; Pajnik & Bajt, 2013; Zani & Barrett, 2012) highlight the need to broaden the definition of political participation beyond voting or running for office. They include the following in the definition of political participation: participating in political demonstrations, signing petitions, membership in political organization, writing letters to politicians, and involvement in trade-union politics, for instance (Martiniello, 2006; Zani & Barrett, 2012).

Relevant studies explore civic participation of immigrants in the European Union (Pajnik & Bajt, 2013; Zani & Barrett, 2012). Zani and Barrett describe a shift from traditional political participation to more indirect forms of participation, including civic participation (2012, p. 273). Civic participation can include membership of community organizations, church organizations, collecting money for charity, and helping neighbors (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 274). Civic participation is important to examining immigrant women's participation; due to immigrant status and this shift, their official involvement in voting and running for political offices often may be seen to be low but they are able to use alternative forms of indirect participation.

Factors influencing participation: Zani and Barrett (2012) pay particular attention to social and psychological factors influencing participation rather than the macro- and social-level factors that they argue are more often accounted for in research. Noted factors include knowledge of civic and political institutions, language skills, education, employment, gender, and more (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 277). Psychological factors include motivations and construction of meaning, and question that those not involved in formal participatory behaviors are not interested in politics (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 275; Martiniello, 2006).

Zani and Barrett also note that women's participation often takes different forms than that of men, with women more likely to be involved in informal political participation, as gendered socialization and gendered responsibilities represent important variables influencing participation (2012, p. 279). This finding supports the need to examine civic participation and non-traditional political participation to obtain an accurate depiction of immigrant women's involvement and ability to influence politics and policies. Additionally, intersecting identities of ethnicity, gender

and age are key factors in shaping life circumstances that influence political participation and perceptions (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 277). The perceived effectiveness of political and civic action, a sense of community belonging, concepts of citizenship and commitment to the community are explained as important psychological variables influencing participation (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 278).

Political Quiescence: The articles "Political participation, mobilisation and representation of immigrants and their offspring in Europe" and "Migrants' Citizenship: Legal Status, Rights and Political Participation" describe the theory of 'political quiescence' which had previously portrayed immigrants as apolitical and apathetic (Bauböck et al., 2006). This was erroneously explained as being due to immigrants being seen as having a lack of political culture and being viewed as short-term workers interested only in economic goals (Martiniello, 2006, pp. 4-5). This theory had been dominant for a long time, obscuring the political engagement and participation of immigrants and contributing to the lack of studies on the subject (Martiniello, 2006). It is important to investigate alternative forms of political and civic participation to avoid continually casting immigrants as apolitical when traditional methods of political participation may not be available or the best option for them in inciting political change.

Informal and Contested Forms of Participation: Several studies also make the distinction between formal and informal participation and examine informal participation as a significant strategy that is often overlooked in conceptions of citizenship participation (Cornwall, 2002; Horst et al., 2019; Horst & Lysaker, 2019; Jdid, 2021; Lister, 2007). This focuses attention on ways of participation that are not facilitated through formal organizations or institutions but happen at varying spatial scales and in the course of people's everyday lives. Horst and Lysaker in particular bring attention to personal interaction of refugees, "*by expressing their identity and perspectives, they aim to claim belonging and inclusion for themselves and others in a wider community,*" thus reconceptualizing their interactions as political (2019, p. 14). Several authors discuss how feminist theories have radically broadened definitions of citizenship participation to politicize the domestic sphere, for instance, conceptualizing motherhood as raising citizens (Cornwall, 2002; Lister, 2007). Literature also brings attention to underexamined forms of participation that are contested but significant, and recognizes that informal forms of participation are oftentimes more accessible

to immigrants (Horst et al., 2019; Jdid, 2021). In this way, the concept is particularly relevant when examining civic and political participation of immigrant women.

Civic Participation and Belonging: In the article "Investigating Everyday Acts of Contributing as 'Admission Tickets' to Belong to the Nation in Norway", Strømsø (2019) investigates how civic participation is positioned as a way that immigrants must demonstrate their belonging to the community and the nation. They, as ontologically insecure citizens, are pressured to prove their belonging through acts of contribution. Strømsø (2019) outlines the consequences of this expectation; by conforming to expectations of contribution, citizens are expected to participate in dominant ways and have the burden to perform their belonging to the dominant group who hold the power define their belonging.

2.2 Literature Gaps

Exploring the political and civic participation of immigrant women has only recently begun to receive adequate scholarly attention. Study of nontraditional forms of political participation and civic participation of immigrants is not common, despite it being crucial to understand how immigrants influence politics and are engaged with the politics and community of the host country. Likewise, it is crucial to understanding how immigrants can be encouraged to participate and what resources and platforms are needed to facilitate integration, representation and a sense of belonging. This study will add to knowledge about the participation of immigrant woman by investigating different and creative ways of participating that are not represented in statistics and their experiences within their forms of participation. Additionally, while available studies often are not gender specific, articles that focus specifically on immigrant women are even rarer. Thus, studies focusing on immigrant women are needed to fill this void, as the intersecting identities of 'immigrant' and 'woman' cause particular challenges that are not fully captured by studies of either identity alone. My study and research questions (see 1.4) are formulated in order to add to existing knowledge by focusing on these gaps of the examination of civic participation of immigrant women; it will also focus on the specific context of Norway, which the available literature also lacks.

Chapter Three: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

3.1 Empowerment

This project utilizes the model of empowerment as articulated by Naila Kabeer (2005) and expanded upon by Sarah Mosedale (2005). Kabeer defines the concept of empowerment as a process through which people gain the ability to make strategic choices that challenge dominant power relations (2005, p. 13). She asserts that for a choice to represent empowerment there must be alternatives available that are seen to exist, in order for there to be a meaningful choice that is not constrained in practice. Agency, resources, and achievement are outlined as the key elements of empowerment. Agency refers to the process of making and carrying out a choice; Kabeer (2005) notes the importance of examining power relations that constrain this ability. Mosedale (2005) expands on this to examine constraints to action further, adding the importance of examining differential social entitlements based on identity that govern agency. Resources refer to the medium through which agency is exercised (in this case, access to community platforms and positions of power in organizations, for instance). Access to resources are governed by social relations (Kabeer, 2005) Achievement represents the extent to one is able to use their new agency and resources to reach the potential of their goals (Kabeer, 2005). Kabeer (2005) is most interested in cases where the empowerment process has challenged power relations in a way that creates long-term transformative change.

This project uses the theory of empowerment in order to examine the potential of civic participation of immigrant women as an empowering choice to be involved, share opinions and affect influential and transformative change. Examining agency, resources and achievement in terms of participants' experiences is useful to understanding and evaluating the potential empowerment in civic participation.

3.2 Active Citizenship

Active citizenship is explained as the participatory aspect of citizenship (Peucker & Ceylan, 2017). The term itself was invented by policy makers, and as argued by Tonkens et al. (2011), adapts the ideals of social movements that call for more inclusion and direct participation. The active citizenship concept reconceptualizes civic and political participation as a duty and obligation rather than a right. This is also influenced by popular neoliberal ideals; the onus is increasingly on the

individual citizen and less on the state to provide for the citizens (de Koning et al., 2015; Soysal, 2012; van der Land, 2014). Individual citizens are conceptualized as partners and subjects of the government who should make valuable contributions to society (van der Land, 2014, p. 426). Active citizenship and increased participation are presented as addressing a democratic deficit and representing the potential for citizens to have more direct participation and influence decision-making and make elected officials more responsible to their constituents (Cornwall, 2002).

The call for active citizenship has also been related to Foucault's concept of governmentality (van der Land, 2014; Jdid, 2021). Through the normative shaping of "good"/active citizenship ideals "*through the configuration of values, beliefs and sentiments*", governments regulate the conduct of citizens as a governmental technique (de Koning et al., 2015, p. 122). The examples of immigrant integration policies that promote cultural assimilation as a responsibility of new citizens and the way in which citizenship participation is taught and encouraged in schools illustrate how the "good" citizen norm is disseminated and influenced, and citizens are "disciplined" to perform the desired behaviors and values (de Koning et al., 2015, p. 122; Wood, 2013). Citizens are molded into ideal subjects who comply with the state's framework for participation (Jdid, 2021, p. 68; Tonkens et al., 2011).

While the active citizenship concept is often presented as unquestionably positive, as more participation and engagement lead to more chances to have an influential voice in politics and the community, several elements embedded within this concept complicate this. For one, the active citizen is applied as a value concept. The "good" citizen, who participates and contributes to society in visibly important ways is valued in contrast to the "failed citizen" who fails to live up to the participatory norms of the active citizen, and the "tolerated" citizen who, depending on the situation and arena, can either be held as belonging to the good citizen concept or being outside of it (Jdid, 2021, pp. 61-65, citing Bridget Anderson, 2013, 2014). Another crucial element to this concept is that the power to judge who meets the "good" citizen criteria and who belongs, lies with the powerful and the dominant group; in this case, largely the state and the hegemonic Norwegian citizen ideal, have the ability to define and construct the discourse surrounding the "good" citizen and judge who is deserving of the label (Jdid, 2021, p. 62). This is not to say that immigrants and immigrant women are passive subjects acted upon by an active citizenship conception created in isolation from them; they participate in the (re)production of this concept, and affirm, contest and

negotiate it; but the power to influence this concept lies more strongly with the state and the ontologically secure white, Norwegian citizen (Horst et al., 2019).

While the ideal of the "good", active citizen applies to the entire population, it is often applied more stringently to immigrants as they are expected to prove and perform their belonging (Strømsø, 2019; Jdid, 2021). The tolerated citizen concept is often applied to immigrants, and immigrant women, which informs its' relevance for this study. The well-integrated immigrant, depending on the situation, is contingently accepted and claimed as belonging or not belonging based on the situation and their contributions (Jdid, 2021; Strømsø, 2019; Tonkens et al., 2011). The tolerated citizen is "*sometimes accepted, sometimes marginal, sometimes examples of fine institutions of national generosity and other times a threat to national identity and themselves*" (Anderson, 2014, pp. 5-6). Conforming to the active citizenship ideal is one way that immigrants prove and make claims to their belonging.

Also included within the active citizenship ideal is the broadening of conceptions of participation, leading to increased recognition of informal and private spheres as sites of civic participation and political engagement (Horst et al., 2019; Jdid, 2021). While this reveals important obscured and undervalued forms of participation, it also increases the burden to participate to other dimensions than the public sphere.

Active citizenship concepts are utilized in this study in order to problematize the expectation of civic participation that is placed on immigrant women and defines their values as "good" citizens. It is used to understand how normative values and expectations influence the experiences and meanings immigrant women ascribe to their participation, how it impacts the ways in which they participate, and whether their participation carries with it a potential to empower them to make transformative change or is top-down in nature and reproduces hierarchies and power relations.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter describes and justifies the methods and research design of this project, as well as detailing the ethical considerations of this project. I carefully considered and selected the best methods and epistemological foundations to fit my research objectives in order to produce a trustworthy, transparent and credible study.

4.1 Study Site

This study was conducted with immigrant women residing in Norway. Interviews were held over Zoom as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, use of Zoom for interviews allowed me to recruit participants from different cities in Norway. Participants resided in urban areas in Norway; the specific cities in which they live have been anonymized due to confidentiality concerns.

4.2 Research Design

Qualitative Study

This project is a qualitative study. I concluded that a qualitative approach would allow me to deeply examine this subject and investigate the perceptions and experiences of immigrant women in regard to their community and political participation. This study investigates whether alternative political strategies and community involvement might be a more appealing, accessible and fruitful strategy to affect change, and how immigrant women may perceive this option. In the qualitative study, complex social issues and meanings are not reduced to variables and pre-determined categories but allow for more in depth and less artificially structured data (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 311). Although the choice of a qualitative study sacrifices a greater sample size and generalizability, it will provide more detailed answers in how my participants as immigrant women perceive their community involvement as political and how they weigh their options to make the most effective positive change to their everyday lives (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 313).

Qualitative studies recognize that meanings are constructed and that there are differing social realities depending on your position and perceptions, as opposed to one positivist 'truthful' reality (Neuman, 2011). Humans create meaning and interpret situations, but there is no one true reality that is correct (Neuman, 2011). For instance, if immigrant women perceive that there are massive barriers to running for political office, whether or not that is true in practice, it affects their

knowledge of their options and affects their reality. Social reality exists as people give meaning to it (Neuman, 2011, p. 102).

Phenomenological Study

This study has a phenomenological design. Phenomenological studies examine the essence of a phenomenon, the lived experiences of the participants and their common meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 75). This design allows me to examine the lived experiences of immigrant women in Norway who are involved in non-conventional forms of political participation and civic participation with attention to their identities as immigrants and women (Creswell, 2013, p. 78). Phenomenological studies also require the interpretation of the meaning of these experiences (Moustakas, 1994). For this study, I am interested in the way immigrant women's participation strategies are influenced by their experience of their intersecting subordinated identities and how they perceive their opportunities to make change in the community and traditional political arenas. This design allows me to examine their shared experiences.

Interpretivist Approach

I utilize the interpretivist philosophical approach for this project. Neuman describes this approach as recognizing the unavoidability of values and embedded meanings in research (Neuman, 2011, p. 107). It views value-free research as a pretense that distorts realities. It is part of the interpretivist research process for researchers to reflect on and analyze their own feelings and values when studying individuals. Values should be recognized and made explicit and not judged (Neuman, 2011, p. 107). The goal is to understand viewpoints and meanings, and not to make a value judgment or advocate for a position.

This philosophical approach will be useful in this study as I examine the experiences of immigrant women's participation and how they perceive these experiences. This approach is the best for this project as the goal is primarily to understand what platforms and strategies immigrants use to participate civically and politically. I believe that immigrants and immigrant women's voices and political opinions should be heard and that barriers to their participation must be removed. However, the purpose of this study is not to advocate for a specific way to fix problems of representation but to examine non-traditional means of participation.

4.3 Selection and recruitment of informants

I invited adult immigrant women who are to some degree participants in or organizers of civic organizations for interviews. I used purposive sampling together with the snowball technique in recruiting participants for this study. I used my contacts at Norwegian voluntary organizations that served immigrant women to put me in contact with potential participants that utilized or contributed to events and services provided by these organizations. One employee of the voluntary organization with which I interned in particular acted as a gatekeeper to put me in contact with several of my participants. Additionally, through snowballing, the recruited participants also referred me to other participants who are active in organizing civic spaces and arenas. All participants were given an information letter and informed consent form clearly stating the objectives of the study and emphasizing that participation is voluntary.

I faced some limitations in gathering participants. I faced time constraints, including my internship that I completed as part of program requirements and additional stressors from the pandemic, that influenced my recruitment process and sample. It was also difficult to reach immigrant women who had more recently immigrated to Norway or had a lower level of education. My ability to recruit participants relatively easy from my internship contacts and gatekeeper influenced the type of participants I received. The majority of my participants had been in Norway for 15 years or more, were employed, had advanced degrees and generally considered themselves to be well-integrated. I also needed to recruit participants who could speak English which further limited prospective participants. As a result, the perspectives I collected likely differed largely from those that might be expressed by immigrant women who were newer to Norway or had fewer resources or education. However, it is also not surprising that the participants who had the most involvement in the community and therefore the most information to aid my thesis were of a higher socio-economic status.

All of my participants seemed to be quite comfortable expressing themselves in English, likely due to their high level of education. However, as English was not the first language of all but one participant, it is possible that their ability to express their thoughts was influenced by having to converse in English and they may have expressed things differently in Norwegian or a different language in which they are more comfortable.

Additionally, another consideration of recruitment was that my participants' countries of origin were diverse. This provided me with distinct perspectives. While recruiting participants from the

same origin country may have provided more generalizability of a particular group and I recognize that immigrant women are not a homogenous category, but due to limited time and recruitment difficulties it was not realistic for me to follow this approach. This thesis is intended to be an explorative study focused on the particular experiences with civic participation of my participants and how this was affected by their identities as immigrant women in what they share in being underrepresented and viewed as an outsider. While there are definite commonalities, it is important that this study is not assumed to generalize the experiences for the entire category of immigrant women.

Table 1 gives a description of my participants. I have chosen not to reveal their countries of origin but instead the regions of origin in order to protect their identity, as Norway is a small country and the number of immigrant women that are involved to a high degree in national or regional platforms of civic involvement and politics is few enough that they might have been identifiable. As a result, I have used broad categorizations of regions. However, providing more clarity might have represented a risk to my participants' anonymity.

Participant Pseudonym	Time in Norway	Language Skill	Region of Origin	Education
Andrea	15+ years	B2	North America	Bachelor's
Farah	15+ years	Fluent	Africa	PhD
Shahrzad	15+ years	Fluent	Middle East	Master's
Mary	20+ years	Fluent	Africa	Master's
Zahra	30+ years	Native Speaker	Middle East	Master's
Rosa	Less than 5 years	B1-B2	North/Latin America	PhD candidate

Table 1: Participant Description

4.4 Methods of Data Collection

My method for data collection was semi-structured interviews. I interviewed six immigrant women on the Zoom platform. The interview sessions were recorded with the consent of the participants. The duration of these interviews generally ranged from 50 minutes to an hour. The interviews were held in English. I informed the participants that upon request I could provide them with the

interview questions before the interview. One participant preferred to fill out the interview questions in a Microsoft Word document and sent that to me through email. We then had an approximately 30-minute interview in which I asked her to elaborate or clarify some of her responses. I also conducted a follow-up interview with one participant to ask for some additional information about some of the answers given.

These interviews were semi-structured with an interview guide, so as not to limit responses (Punch, 2014a, p. 145). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to pose follow-up questions and follow new lines of inquiry that arose from responses to other questions. My interview guide inquired into the participants' experiences with participation in Norway, in which organizations they are involved, and what strategies they use to participate to affect change in issues that matter to them. I also asked questions to examine how effective they perceive these strategies to be and whether they find the available arenas to be adequate. As I interviewed people and noted their responses to how I asked questions and common themes, I refined and adjusted my interview guide to encourage more responses or follow up on interesting lines of inquiry. Please see the Appendix D to view the interview guide in full.

Originally, I had hoped to use observation or participant observation as a secondary method of data collection for this project by attending (with the consent of participants) the forms of community participation that they described. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions this was not possible.

4.5 Data Management

Interviews were conducted over Zoom with my University of Bergen account. Interview recordings were stored in the University of Bergen's SAFE system, ensuring that no unauthorized persons are able to access the personal data. I transcribed the interviews into Microsoft Word documents in SAFE and anonymized them. The anonymized transcripts were saved on SAFE and my password-protected computer. I managed the data through NVivo 12, the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software developed by QSR International (QSR International, 2020).

4.6 Data Analysis

I utilized thematic analysis to analyze the data and to identify relevant themes and patterns. I followed the six steps of this process identified by Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 87-93). The first

step was to familiarize myself with the data, transcribe the interviews, re-read the data and begin thinking of ideas for coding and noticing what is of interest. The second step was to begin creating specific codes for sentences, phrases and paragraphs that are significant, being as thorough as possible. In the third step, I created broader themes into which I categorized the codes, and that represent important elements of the data set. The fourth step was to review the themes to be certain the codes fit well within them and were well represented by them, and to delete or create new themes that are meaningful. The themes must reflect the meanings found in the data set. The fifth step was to define themes and identify the interesting or important aspect captured by each theme. The final step was to produce the report, using evidence from the data set to analyze the themes and their meanings and their significance for answering the research questions. The data analysis from coding to categorization was be aided the usage of a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), Nvivo 12. The software helped with the management of data and making the analysis process more systematic and hence more transparent and trustworthy. See Appendix A to view the Thematic Table.

4.7 Trustworthiness

Shenton (2004) explains the four essential concepts that ensure a study's trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. To make sure my study is credible, I provide detailed descriptions of the phenomena and use well-established research methods and a systematic method of data analysis (thematic analysis) (Shenton, 2004, pp. 64-65). Showing representative extracts from the transcribed text of my interviews adds to the credibility of this project (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 110). Another strategy to increase credibility is to seek agreement among co-researchers (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 110). To this end, I utilized the strategy of co-coding an anonymized interview transcript with another student in order to reflect on my coding and analysis, consider elements I had neglected or assumptions I had made (see Appendix E). I have provided a detailed description of the research process to ensure the dependability of the project (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). To show confirmability of the study, description of the decisions made in approaching the study are required to make visible values and beliefs that influence the process (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). I have given a detailed description of the context of the study to allow assessment of the study's transferability.

4.8 Role of Researcher

To produce a study that is credible and trustworthy, I must examine and be aware of my own values, preconceptions and biases and not allow them to influence the research process. The researcher must avoid interpreting interview responses and observational data with their own biased lenses and must avoid using leading questions that prompt a preferred answer. I crafted my interview guide (see Appendix D) with the intention of avoiding asking leading questions or questions with built-in assumptions.

I have also reflected on my own position as an immigrant woman in Norway. As an immigrant woman myself, I find it extremely important that immigrant women are able to have a political voice and I am critical of the political system and state of diversity and inclusion in Norway. I have had to separate my own viewpoints on the issues that I discuss with my participants and focus on interpreting their own viewpoints without the lens of my own views. I have also found it important to be aware of my positionality as a white woman from a Western country, and I have made efforts to continually reflect and examine my assumptions in order to avoid interpreting situations through the lens of Western feminism as participants may come from different backgrounds, contexts and may have different norms and values.

I am also aware that my own limited experience conducting interviews for academic research constitutes a limitation. It was at times difficult to judge when to press participants for more information or ask them to examine their answers and explain some of the background behind them while being conscious of not leading them to a certain answer or suggesting that their answer was not sufficient.

4.9 Ethics

It is of the utmost importance when producing research that all ethical procedures are followed and participants' rights to confidentiality and anonymity are preserved. I followed all ethical procedures throughout this research project. This section details the ethical principles followed in this project and the institutional ethical clearance that this project was granted.

4.9.1 Ethical Principles

Informed Consent

It is indispensable to gain the informed consent of participants. All participants were given an informed-consent letter to sign to ensure they are participating voluntarily and do so having

received all information required for an informed decision. This form clearly explains the details and objectives of the project. This form also assures participants that their information will be confidential and stored securely, and that I have anonymized their identities for their privacy. The participants were also given the option to give oral consent. Any potential academic publication of the results of this study will likewise preserve the anonymity of study participants. A copy of the informed consent letter can be found in Appendix C.

Confidentiality

The participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality are crucial. Information disclosed to the researcher is based on the assurance of privacy and confidentiality and cannot simply be reduced to following legal requirements – all efforts must be made to ensure confidentiality (Punch, 2014b, p. 47). The topic of immigrant rights is politically contentious and the women I interviewed were active in public life and consequently I was careful to protect their confidentiality. A gatekeeper helped me to recruit a couple of my participants. Despite their knowledge of my recruitment of several of my participants, the information these participants provided me with in interviews was naturally not shared with the gatekeeper and kept confidential. Extra effort was made to remove any identifiable details from the quotes I utilized from their transcribed interviews. Participant data, including interview recordings and full transcripts were stored within UiB's SAFE desktop.

Anonymity

Participants were given pseudonyms and any identifying details they provided that might make them identifiable (such as country of origin or the names of the smaller voluntary organizations with which participants were involved) were anonymized.

4.9.2 Institutional Clearances

I applied for ethical clearance from the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) and received their clearance on 21 December 2020. See Appendix B for the attached ethical clearance form. This project is also registered in RETTE, the University of Bergen's system for risk and compliance in research and student projects.

Chapter Five: Exploring Civic Participation of Immigrant Women in Norway: Arenas, Platforms, And Barriers

Chapter Five explores the ways in which the participants are involved in the community. Participants also discussed constraints and barriers to their community participation.

5.1 Description of participants' community activities

Participants described the activities in the community in which they participated and the organizations of which they were a part.

Involvement with NGOs: All participants reported being involved to some degree with non-governmental organizations. Often these organizations had social justice aims. Andrea described her involvement with many organizations, which included volunteering to teach English, executing fundraisers, and donating time and food to facilitate events that support immigrant women's professional lives. Andrea is also involved as a board member in an organization of ex-pats from her country of origin which regularly raises money for charitable organizations.

Farah described taking part in a program offered by an anti-racism organization to counter prejudice against the Muslim community and confront the racism she encountered in Norway. As part of this program, she opened her home to Norwegian participants to invite them to talk with her and ask her questions about being a Muslim woman. Farah explained how this was a way to encourage Norwegians to challenge their prejudices and assumptions, "*I started talking and they felt, oh she can talk Norwegian, and she is a master's student, she is not undermined by her husband, all these prejudices just started falling one after the other*". Farah made lasting connections with the participants of these programs and they shared in each other's cultural and religious traditions, such as Christmas, Easter, the Norwegian National Day and Ramadan.

Shahrzad and Mary were active in Red Cross Norway. Mary also worked with another NGO for 10 years addressing the challenges of minority and migrant families and migrant participation in society, as well as being involved in two other organizations dedicated to migrants and minorities. Mary is also involved in an organization for professional women working on projects to empower women and young girls in Norway and internationally. Zahra is involved with an organization formed to support freedom of speech and counter extremism and radicalization; she also is involved with a consultancy firm to provide pro-bono work for non-profit organizations. Zahra

advocates for immigrant entrepreneurs, and is involved in peace programs to support emerging leaders. Rosa volunteers her time to do tasks relating to event management and social media for an organization dedicated to helping immigrant women find employment and improve their skills.

Farah and Shahrzad founded their own NGO with the mission of helping immigrants find belonging and to help them to integrate (although both are critical of the term integration). Farah describes the main activity of the organization as "*producing podcasts with immigrants and role models and figures that can give inspiration for others or other newcomers to say, it's easy actually, we can integrate here, examples of they broke the code here, here they broke the ice.*"

Shahrzad, Mary, Zahra and Farah explained their primary purpose for being civically active as altruistic or related to social justice aims, such as helping others, particularly minorities, confronting stereotypes and trying to change the system to be more equitable and inclusive. Mary explained, "*I feel as a human being it's a collective responsibility that we should create an environment for where everyone can thrive. When others are not thriving, we must ask why and see if we can contribute to making it better for them.*" Shahrzad wanted to create a positive legacy for her children and change the system. She explained that immigrants are not prioritized in the Norwegian systems of government, schools and health care. Zahra felt similarly; her experiences of unfairness growing up as a refugee in Norway influenced her to push for change. She knew she needed support to successfully change the system, leading to her decision to engage in community, "*I knew that I wouldn't be able to do this alone. You need a team in order to change it.*"

Neighborhood involvement and dugnad: Participants described their involvement in the Norwegian concept *dugnad* in which a group (volunteer organization, neighborhood, schools) partakes in providing a public good together, such as cleaning the neighborhood and everyone in the group is expected to participate. Andrea, Shahrzad, Mary and Zahra reported taking part in dugnad. Andrea described her experience of dugnad as a mandatory group effort essential to Norwegian culture, "*every organization has it, it's mandatory. It doesn't feel like you can say no to dugnad. And it's something that I feel in the Norwegian culture they take pride in. Everybody plays their part, there's no job too small.*" Shahrzad described a particular case of dugnad in which she took part, "*a family has been thrown out of their house, so the people in the district have taken a dugnad, a collaborative effort to help the family to raise money and get their house back.*" She described also how dugnad mobilized the community to be able to exert pressure on local

politicians to make change. Mary felt the concept of dugnad was familiar to immigrants rather than a typically Norwegian concept as it is often presented, "*we come from collectivistic societies. We are used to having big families, we are used to helping others, a dugnad is not something new.*"

Andrea and Mary described significant involvement in their local neighborhood. Mary is a part of the neighborhood committee that is responsible for planning neighborhood activities for children and holidays, "*It leads to a sense of belonging in the community, you get to know the neighbors and I've learned a lot. I've been in the committee and I've been in the election board where I was the only woman with three old Norwegian men who have even grown up in this neighborhood.*" Andrea is involved in the local community garden and works with a diverse population promoting neighborhood involvement and encourages them *"to take part in environmental and sustainable efforts to experience nature, locally sourced food and community."* Andrea serves food, works in the fields and encourages new membership in the garden. She also works with "*immigrant families and elderly citizens to get them involved with community activities*" and executes fundraisers. She is also active in the Parent-Teacher Association for her children's school.

Involvement in a religious organization: Andrea and Mary were involved in religious and faith-based charitable organizations. Andrea participated in a couple of churches, one of which was Norwegian, and another of which held services in English. Andrea helped with church fundraisers to help refugees or the poor, as well as volunteering locally with the congregation, "*they had me help a new mom. She wasn't poor but she was a single mom, and she had twins. She just needed someone to give her a break so she could shower. I would take the babies for a walk.*" Andrea's other volunteer efforts for the church included collecting goods, jackets, and food items to donate. Andrea also participated in *TV-Aksjonen* (an annual Norwegian charity fund raising event), in which she and her children went door-to-door to collect money for a charitable cause.

Usage of the media: Farah used the media to bring attention to the issues about which she feels passionate. She has written articles for the local newspaper to influence the budget of the municipality and advocate for funding allocation to the issues she cares about, "*they don't give a budget to the school, to renew it or renovate it, so I started writing articles to get the people really mad. My hard cases are inclusion and diversity, the health care sector, and schools and rights for children.*" Farah used the media to mobilize public outrage against defunding schools in her community.

Lobbying and letter-writing campaigns: Participants described using strategies such as letter-writing campaigns, lobbying and demonstrations. Shahrzad, Farah, and Mary used the strategy of letter-writing to create change. Mary was in the process of writing a letter as part of her consultation group (*høringsgruppe*) to address a change in immigration policy that makes it more difficult to attain permanent residence, extending the time requirement from three to five years: "*I am writing a letter in regard to women who might be living in violent relationships. This policy makes it hard for them, they can't break out of the relationship until after the five years.*" Andrea, Farah, Shahrzad, and Mary participated in lobbying and political demonstrations as a strategy to affect change. Mary was very familiar with lobbying and demonstrations and had been involved with organizing and participating. She shared that she demonstrated to support asylum seekers and the Black Lives Matter movement.

5.2 Barriers to the Accessibility of Civic Participation

Participants described their experiences with the accessibility of civic participation, and how accessible opportunities are for them to be involved in planning and decision-making.

5.2.1 Barriers to entry and within the system

Language and information: Participants commonly named two interrelated barriers that constrain immigrant women's involvement in the community; 1) language barriers and 2) a lack of information about opportunities. Participants reported that it is difficult to find information about opportunities both generally and in an accessible language. While the majority of participants are fluent in Norwegian, they highlighted language as a common barrier for immigrant women.

Zahra felt it is important to make information available so that citizens can easily be engaged, "*any information that is about how to be involved should be in all languages. This information is important for those wanting to create change to know in order to support these women to be more active in their local communities.*" Rosa, who estimated her level of Norwegian to be between B1 and B2 level, explained that she finds it difficult to search for information about opportunities in which she may want to be involved, "*even with a middle Norwegian level it's hard to even Google what you want to look for. If I were looking for another kind of group, I wouldn't even know how to look for it.*" Andrea also felt that lack of accessible information was a barrier for finding opportunities to be civically active, "*You really have to dig to find it and really want to do it. Organizations don't have great marketing programs here.*"

Mary noted the lack of information shows a strong need for a strong network to facilitate opportunities for involvement, which might be difficult for immigrant women to develop, "*if you don't have a network, if you don't know someone, you don't get access to this information. So there are many people who would have participated in things, but they don't know about it*." The combination of Norwegian reliance on social networks and language barriers represents substantial barriers to immigrant women seeking to be involved in the community.

Distrust, and social codes and norms: Andrea and Mary explained how they encountered a distrust of new people, lack of formal onboarding procedures for volunteers and exclusionary social codes. Andrea found that when trying to join Norwegian organizations, they were distrustful of her and her initiative, "*they're not openly trusting people. They need to get to know you first before they allow you into an organization…You're not welcomed in from the minute you walk in the door*." Andrea felt this was connected to the Norwegian concept of Janteloven which professes that people should not boast about their accomplishments because everyone should be seen to be worth the same. This concept emphasizes egalitarianism but can also be restrictive as it does not value people's individuality and unique competences, as Andrea expressed:

"*I feel that organizations here adopt that mentality of Janteloven, where it's the group above the individual, don't talk about yourself or brag about what you can do. When you come in with that type of motivated spirit, it's just extinguished. They would rather wait to see you prove that you mean what you say, so there's definitely a getting to know period there*."

Andrea emphasized that she has noticed that the concept of Janteloven has been influential even in international organizations in Norway and is not restricted to majority-Norwegian organizations.

Mary agreed that the distrust of new people constitutes a barrier. She added that it is important for immigrant women to feel welcome in an organization, "*It has to do with openness and feeling you have been welcomed. If you are a visitor, you want your host to welcome you in and then you offer what you can do to help*". Mary and Andrea both felt that often it was necessary to have a mutual connection with an organization in order to be onboarded promptly. Mary explained, "*Norway is a country that is rooted so much in organizations. But getting in there you need to know someone who can recommend you or take you in with them*."

Mary mentioned that she felt like an outsider within an organization where she was the only one who was not a white Norwegian woman. The pattern of behavior and social codes and norms

within the organization that were natural and obvious to the ethnic white Norwegians made Mary initially question whether she belonged to that group:

"*When I joined it, I was the only foreigner, they were all white Norwegian women and it's just like the rotary club, how they behave, so I felt, do I really belong here? But afterwards when I saw what they worked with I got passionate about it ... I even started a project in my country of origin sponsoring girls there. But initially the threshold is a bit higher if you don't know anyone there because it's getting into the club and then people have already formed their own groupings and all this, it becomes kind of exclusive.*"

In this way, the invisible norms of behavior and homogeneity of the group functioned as barrier.

Difference is not valued: Shahrzad discussed how difference is not valued in the Norwegian society. She explained that community organizations look for similarities to make them comfortable in collaborating with immigrant women,

"*I did interviews where I called several key people in Oslo Municipality as well as in some agencies and big companies. I asked them, what does it take for you to employ someone from another background? They said, 'unfortunately, as long as you have something that is like us, if you have something that we can connect with, then it's a great start. We choose people that are like ourselves, we don't choose differences.' And this is people that are in key positions in the society. And this is the same thing with the NGOs, with the community*".

Shahrzad confirmed her assumption that being seen as 'too different' is a prevalent factor influencing access to participation in NGOs and community involvement.

Immigrant women are seen as victims: The majority of participants expressed that they felt they were constrained by the Norwegian narrative of immigrant women being victims or needing help. Shahrzad described how this narrative acted as a barrier to her participation:

"*W**hen you go to an NGO, they would rather give you an offer than notice your competencies… it's "victiming", you know, like you are a victim, you need help. Most people don't need that kind of help, some of us want to help people*"

Andrea shared her experience of volunteering to serve food at a conference, ironically on migration. She encountered a tendency that Norwegians talk about immigrant women rather than with them. Additionally, she noticed the expectation that immigrant women were voiceless and not willing or able to share their own views or speak for themselves:

"*I was there just to serve food, and the host was introducing me and just saying thank you, but he was talking about my story and it just made me feel so uncomfortable. So I walked up on stage and said, can I introduce myself? And I took the mic from him because I felt I can tell a better story about myself than he could. A story that resonates with why I was there donating my time,*

that I was an immigrant too, and that I am a woman. That I found a way to be heard and it was through food and through serving.”

Andrea shared how they were surprised by her introducing herself and wanting to use her voice:

“The compliments that I got at the end of that seminar were mainly from women in leadership positions, who said, 'most of the times we feel that migrant women don't want to share their voice, you know?' … but that is not true. We all have a voice to share and the more people that stand up and use it, the more it encourages other voices because everyone's got a different story and background, from where they came from to what they experienced and what they want to do with it.”

Andrea's volunteer work cooking and serving at the conference allowed her access to this space with migration 'experts' and she was able to challenge their assumptions about immigrant women.

Power imbalances within organizations: Andrea and Zahra reported the power imbalances within community organizations as barriers to involvement in planning and decision-making. They reflected on the structures of leadership in their organizations in terms of gender and their status as immigrants. Andrea explained that it was mostly men in decision-making positions and felt that she was not welcome to step into a leadership role due to her immigrant status and her gender:

“In the organizations that I'm involved with, like the PTA, even the community garden where it's pure volunteers, as an immigrant and with my Norwegian language not being so strong, I don't always feel that my opinions are heard, especially by the men in the group. Even though the community garden was founded by a woman and most of the work is done by women. I love the community garden and I love the work they do, but definitely I don't feel that I would be welcome to step up in a board position even though men in that organization won't do it as well.”

Andrea also explained that the leadership and members of these majority-Norwegian organizations did not utilize the skills of immigrants to improve their organization. Zahra similarly felt that it might be easy to take part in the programs offered by organizations but not in decision-making and leadership positions. She felt that for deeper involvement such as becoming a board member, more work needed to be done to ensure equal opportunities to be involved.

5.2.2 Personal Barriers

Participants also reported personal barriers that limited their participation in the community. They noted time, energy, and personal background with civic involvement as barriers at this level.

Time and energy: Andrea, Farah, Shahrzad, Mary and Zahra all mentioned time and energy as factors that may limit immigrant women's involvement in the community. Factors such as taking care of the family and employment limited their time to be involved. Farah explained how she

makes a significant effort to balance her time with her family responsibilities, employment and community involvement and leisure time, "*I don't watch TV because I feel that I need to prioritize the community*." Shahrzad shared that although it is difficult to balance her time, her community involvement is essential to her sense of self. She described the responsibilities that limited her time to be engaged:

"*family, my own job, my start-up… I am a mother and constantly feel guilty! But at the same time, I love to be engaged! When I hear that someone is struggling, the first thing I can think is, how do I help you? And I never hesitate, and this is something that my husband has to accept, it is a part of me, and no one can change that.*"

Four of the participants had children, a factor that might limit their time to participate. Additionally, Andrea, Shahrzad, Mary and Farah in some way mentioned imparting their values of active participation to their children.

The majority of participants recognized that civic participation is often very low on the list of needs of immigrant women. They suggest that many are focused on establishing themselves in Norway, integrating into the labor market, looking after their families and learning the Norwegian language before they think about getting involved in the community. Five participants have been in Norway for more than fifteen years and have had time to establish themselves. Farah explained:

"*I know from statistics that immigrants have low participation rates in regard to being members in NGOs for example. And that's really a sad thing and a pity. I myself was not a member of anything for many years, because I was just focusing on the language, having kids and working, working, working, but once you have that piece of mind that you are ready to do something.*"

Mary shared that these factors made it hard for her to encourage immigrant women to volunteer, "*most don't have the extra time to be involved in a voluntary thing. I have tried to get volunteers, they are like, it's not paid, I don't have time.*" Participants recognized that there are many constraints on the time and energy of immigrant women that might prevent their involvement.

Background of community participation: All but one of the participants had a strong background of either being involved in community activities in their countries of origin or their family being active. Rosa felt she did not have a strong prior background in participation and that it impacted and possibly explains her comparatively lower level of involvement. Zahra inferred that for some immigrant women who do not share her background of a high level of community involvement, unfamiliarity with norms and cultures of active participation may be a barrier to overcome.

Chapter Six: Appeal and Benefits of Civic Participation

This chapter explores how participants described the appeal and benefits of civic participation as a way to create change.

6.1 Benefits of Civic Participation

This section explores the benefits of involvement in civic participation that participants discussed. Some of these benefits included personal benefits, while other participants commented about the disadvantages or barriers to political participation, that in comparison show how civic participation might be a more accessible or effective strategy for an immigrant woman that is looking to affect change about issues that matter to her.

6.1.1 Social arena, integration, and networking benefits

Participants discussed the personal benefits they felt community involvement provided them. These included opportunities to make connections and social networks, develop their Norwegian language skills, as well as provide an arena for them to be social and feel understood as an immigrant woman.

Making connections and being social: Community involvement was expressed by participants to be a promising arena for making connections, networking and 'integrating' into the society. Shahrzad talked about the possibility to network through activities like dugnad that might lead to employment opportunities. Andrea and Rosa referenced the intent to integrate and be social as a motivation for their civic participation. Rosa explained that she was looking for a community that understood and shared her experiences and anxieties as an immigrant woman, to which her Norwegian family could not fully understand or connect: "*I was feeling so lonely... But when I first got in touch with a certain NGO during a panel discussion about immigrants and employment, the panelists were saying stuff that was hitting me personally, they went through what I am.*"

Mary discussed her entry to community involvement as part of a youth outreach program and how it helped her to make connections with Norwegians as well as to practice the language and feel included, "*when I went to the Norwegian school, Red Cross invited the minority youth for a weekend trip outside the city. Afterwards we linked up and started a group, so that's how I got my first Norwegian friends.*"

Farah also felt the need as a social, extroverted person to make connections and address stereotypes that prevented her from making friends with Norwegians who were not initially able to see past her identity as a Muslim woman. As a result of her participation in an anti-racism program, in which she invited Norwegians to her home, she was able to make many connections. This program also helped her to feel seen, respected, and to share cultural traditions; "*from these 11 meetings, these 11 have actually turned my life upside down because they introduced me to 600 people!*". Farah was invited by many of these people to join their Easter or national day celebrations and in turn she invited them to fast and break the fast for Ramadan with her family: "*Such things show that you don't need to neglect one community or culture, you can actually be proud of both cultures and show that you have a sense of belonging and community and solidarity between both.*" The ability to make connections through this program, share her traditions and feel accepted by Norwegians positively impacted Farah's sense of belonging in Norway.

Building self-esteem through civic participation: Andrea and Zahra expressed that civic participation can be an important arena for immigrant women to feel confidence in their competencies and their ability to use them in their new context. Zahra suggested that it is important to provide immigrant women with tools that allow them to create initiatives or programs that fit their needs and give them the agency to plan things themselves, "*that builds character, motivation and self-esteem. When we master something or are acknowledged to be good at something, it creates a self-awareness and a feeling that you can be proud of yourself.*" Zahra also suggested that immigrant women's participation is often obscured or undervalued, "*rarely we see them for all that they do…they're usually working, they're breadwinners, they are taking care of their families, and siblings, so I think just providing them tools is a good step forward.*"

Andrea expressed pride in her drive to help others, particularly as an immigrant, "*I wear my skin color and that's the first thing they see. And it becomes, where are you from? And why are you here? It makes me feel proud, that I don't have to be from Norway to want to help the people that need help in this country.*" Despite the negative experience of being seen as an outsider and through the lens of skin color, Andrea was able to feel proud of her compassion to help others in a nation into which she was not born.

6.1.2 Benefits of Civic Participation in opposition to Political Participation

Several themes emerged when participants talked about their civic participation about why civic participation might be an appealing strategy for immigrant women to utilize when wanting to affect change rather than utilizing political participation.

Not being labeled as political: Zahra discussed how immigrant women might want to avoid being labeled as political, and this might prevent them from wanting to take part in political participation or even non-traditional forms of political participation, such as lobbying or participating in demonstrations. She explained that being labeled as political or being conflated with a particular cause, movement or party may not represent you fully in all your viewpoints and would be wary of being involved explicitly in political movements:

> "*[It] often feels if one does this, then you are not apolitical, as soon as you start protesting, you're a part of something, it's easy to feel that you're being labeled…for those who just support a cause and not necessarily the bigger ideology or the bigger thought behind it, it might cause them to back down or they do not want to be associated with this type of strategy, either because of their job or the family they have, so it could be in a way that it prevents participation. So citizen participation can also be other ways of participating.*"

Shahrzad echoed this viewpoint, saying that many immigrant women she knew may not want to be involved in politics because of a negative association with politics from their background, "*they say that politics is destroying this country rather than being a part of it. They would rather do a dugnad or be a part of a petition or something, but they will not be a part of politics.*"

Mary articulated how being labeled as apolitical could be an advantage. She decided not to join a political party, and discussed how she uses her neutrality as a strategy, "*when we are going to write an article or something it's important that we are not being political in how we portray it, we are not siding with any politician, we are kind of neutral in a way, but then we can raise our issues.*" She calculated that having a neutral stance will be more effective in getting her viewpoints heard.

Andrea talked about seeing immigrant politicians in the news and the extra level of scrutiny and criticism that they received, as well as the perception of them as an outsider. She described how her Norwegian family perceived a woman representative in Parliament with immigrant parents, "*they say she's done really great but they still look at her with suspicion.*" Andrea continued to discuss the Green Party (*Miljøpartiet De Grønne*) politician Lan Marie Nguyen Berg, also a

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woman politician with immigrant background who Andrea felt faced a disproportionate amount of criticism due to her background:

"*All the changes she has instituted are blamed on her because she looks like an immigrant, and I know she gets a lot of heat because she has a loud voice. She's someone that I see in the higher levels of government that is an immigrant voice and it's like, negative…she's the type that gets death threats, and such. Because she just seems so unyielding, like, they're done giving into the white Norwegian men who have been running the country for so long.*"

This backlash likely affects immigrant women's willingness to be politically involved or be seen as political.

Focus on the issues that matter to you: Several participants felt that their community involvement allowed them to prioritize the causes and issues that were important to them in a way that political participation would not.

Shahrzad, who previously was involved in politics as a member of a political party and was part of several committees for the party, decided to instead try to change the system through community involvement, explained that she felt better able to focus her energy on the causes important to her and received more opportunities to make change,

"*Now I have been much better at choosing what I want to be involved in. And now, because of my activities, suddenly I was invited to a group of expert women in EU that are trying to do the same things that I am trying to do and now, we see how we can collaborate to actually affect the policies together from an EU perspective, and take it down to grassroots, local/regional/national level. So, for me, it seems that the road that I have taken has been right for me. And it has led to connections with others with mutual interests, and hopefully we can make a bigger change.*"

Zahra also felt she was able to better choose what to spend her time on by being involved in the community. Zahra also expressed that she felt she could do more effective work about the causes that mattered to her from outside of the political system, "*I always tried to sort of work across the political parties instead of being one or the other… I wanted to work for the cause itself, or for those things that really matter.*" Zahra felt that by being outside of the political system and outside of a political party, she could more directly focus on the causes important to her, and that political party membership distracted from the cause.

Don't have sacrifice your difference to fit the system: As a former politician, Shahrzad expressed that there was an expectation that to be successful in politics, you must give up your individuality and difference,

"I think it is easier in NGOs than in politics. There is somehow the expectation in politics that you have to somehow be like them. Or have a high education or have a language with which you can communicate... They are saying that they are interested in your difference, but they will never allow you to have a key position, but they are not saying that aloud, of course."

Shahrzad felt that through her participation in the community, she was able to maintain her individuality. While she felt that pressure within the NGOs as well, she expressed that it was more intense pressure in the formal political arena. Mary also explained that she feels there is a freedom that comes with not being attached to a political party, *"I love that freedom and I think that's good and I can stand for myself and I can stand for my causes as Mary, I'm not Mary the Politician."*

Andrea felt a specific type of immigrant viewpoint that corresponded with Norwegian viewpoints was being raised above others, and that in order to be successful in politics and be heard, *"you kind of have to be singing what the rest of the population is singing."* Zahra felt similarly that immigrant politicians seemed to try and minimize their background and present themselves as Norwegian in a way that devalues their immigrant background:

"The underrepresentation comes kind of with the fact that you have to be more like them than different, so I think the moment you step into a representative role, that you become more and more similar to a Norwegian standard, a model, just to be accepted…I think the authenticity and the side of being proud of your roots is something that I haven't heard enough about."

Additionally, it was expressed that by utilizing community participation rather than political participation, there was a lesser need to compromise on your personal values. Shahrzad described how she could not accept the harsh immigration stance that her political party took, and this led to her decision to utilize civic participation to make change rather than be engaged as a member of a political party.

Civic participation as sufficient to create change: Mary felt that she was already able to affect change through her civic involvement successfully, *"My friend and I decided that we really don't want to join a political party. We are already doing politics in many ways. And I would say I'm a social politician. And everything we do, we do it strategically to affect the politics."* For Mary, to join a formal political party was, in her view, unnecessary in leading her to achieve her goals. Additionally, she compared the effect of civic participation to voting, implying it is more effective and explained the duty she felt to be highly active in the community:

"When you vote you contribute to some change indirectly, but I think the greatest change is to be involved in, saying your views and being active in organizations … we can't complain

when decisions are already made when we are not there, when we are given the opportunity to be there, if I'm asked to participate and I don't turn up, then I didn't use my right, my position, to do it."

6.1.3 Judged to be more effective

While most participants felt that political participation represented one effective way of creating change in some cases, many expressed that they felt that civic participation was *more* effective to create change and had more effect on their daily lives.

More direct effect on everyday life: Shahrzad explained that she felt her community involvement and what she termed 'micro-actions' such as dugnad were more effective than her past traditional political participation as a party member:

> "*Micro-actions are something that is extremely valuable but underappreciated. If there were more focus on it, you would see that, even though I have held official political positions, those micro-actions had more effect than those big ones, because you are affecting the people in the grassroots and not the upper level. When you mobilize the people, when you affect them, when you connect with them, when you are part of doing something good in the grassroots, then collectively you are affecting the ecosystem.*"

She felt engaging in micro-actions through community involvement allowed her to help people through grassroots and have more of an effect on her local community.

Andrea also discussed how she felt small ways to influence peoples' everyday lives were overlooked in the political system:

> "*With these organizations that I'm part of, these are things that help people bring joy and happiness to their everyday professional and home life. When looking at it from a political perspective, I think that gets ignored, like what brings you joy every day. Politics seems like such a heavy topic that they're not seeing how it affects the small changes in life.*"

For Andrea, politics seemed distanced from her everyday life and she felt the political system was not concerned with her well-being.

Avoid frustration of the system: Shahrzad expressed that while she was engaged in the political system as a party member, she felt her frustration with the constraints consumed much of her energy that could have been better spent working on the issues that she cared about, "*everything is about making allies and who do you know, and a lot of politicians use it as a career ladder, not for the purpose of actually doing anything. And that collides with my perception and values.*" By

being involved civically, she was able to continue to work to change the system and help others as she originally intended without experiencing this frustration:

"*I'd never want to give up, but I think I can affect much more without being in the politics. In politics, I think I use more time in being frustrated than actually doing good. I was frustrated with the system, I found gaps, I was loudly telling them about the gaps, but still they were not ready to change it.*"

Civic participation gave Shahrzad the opportunity to use the energy she expended being frustrated with the political system to be productive in working towards the same goals.

Leads to bigger platforms: For Shahrzad and Mary, being involved in the community led to more opportunities to use their voices and create change. Shahrzad explained how she was invited to take part in an EU initiative with other women to affect policies due to her community activities. Mary explained how her participation, starting with the Red Cross, led to more and more opportunities and increasingly larger platforms, "*when asked to participate in something I would just say yes without thinking and then I figure it out after. And in this way, it kind of paved the way for me to different arenas.*" She was involved in many forums, was invited to speak at important regional and national events and became involved with a Norwegian organization focused on empowering young girls in Norway and internationally. Mary utilized all the opportunities she received from her community involvement to be engaged at different levels to use her voice and skills to bring about change.

In these last two chapters, I have described the findings of this study; participants detailed their various forms of participation, the barriers to this participation they encountered as well as the appeal and benefits of their civic participation. In the following chapter, these findings will be discussed and analyzed in detail with literature and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss my findings, place them in reference to existing literature and interpret them using the frameworks of empowerment and the active/ "good" citizen concept.

7.1 Ways of Participation

This study examined the civic participation and non-traditional ways of political participation used by immigrant women in order to advocate for change. My findings revealed a myriad of creative ways that the immigrant women in this study participated in the community to contribute to a public good, incite change and advocate for a fairer system and society, particularly on behalf of other immigrants, immigrant women and minorities (pp. 18-21).

This study was conceived partly in response to literature on political participation of immigrants that called for a reconceptualization of how the political participation of immigrants and immigrant women in particular, is measured (Bauböck et al., 2006; Martiniello, 2006; Zani & Barrett, 2012). The previously dominant thesis of political quiescence presented migrants to Europe (and by extension immigrant women) as passive and uninterested in having a political voice, as statistics showed a lesser rate of political participation, often measured through voter turnout rates and rates of running for office, among immigrant women (Bauböck et al., 2006; Martiniello, 2006).

Zani & Barrett point out that research has revealed that immigrant populations are not less active than dominant groups, but their forms of participation differ as they are concerned with addressing issues related to their minority status (2012, p. 276; Pajnik & Bajt, 2013). Wood further explains that experiences of marginalization or exclusion produce varied experiences of citizenship and result in *"unpredictable patterns of citizenship participation"* (2013, p. 51). According to Wood, the experiences of marginalization faced by immigrant women due to their migration status, gender and factors of skin color and religion, influence the ways in which they participate. My findings confirm these assertions, as much of my participants' involvement focused on helping other immigrants or immigrant women. The majority of participants were highly active in civic participation in a way that speaks to a high level of political consciousness, and would not be captured in traditional measurements of political participaton. For example, Farah and Shahrzad's podcast focused on helping immigrant women to learn how to seek inclusion in society. They were critical of the term integration, recognizing the normative values within it, showing their

recognition of the politics embedded in the term (p. 19). Many participants also expressed motivations that show how their experiences of marginalization influence their ways of participation; such as a desire to change the system in response to experiencing the unfairness of it, and recognizing the way it does not benefit everyone (p. 19). In this way, my findings are in line with literature that shows how marginalized identities shape particular ways of participation (Horst et al., 2019; Pajnik & Bajt, 2013; Wood, 2013; Zani & Barrett, 2012).

7.2 Meanings and Motivations

As briefly described above, many participants described their motivations to be civically active as a way to create change to an unfair system. Participants were cognizant of structural discrimination and barriers faced by immigrants and immigrant women and described motivations to take action against these issues. For instance, participants Zahra and Shahrzad emphasized a strong motivation to "*change the system*" after having had formative experiences encountering unfairness after moving to Norway at a young age (p. 19). These expressions resonate with Wood's assertion that experiences of marginalization can act as inspiration to address the inequality and racism in their community (2013, p. 57). Participants' articulated motivations showed their desire to affect social change relating to social justice and the issues faced by immigrants and were influenced by their experiences of their identities' marginalization, and an internal drive to ameliorate these issues and do good (Wood, 2013; Zani & Barrett, 2012).

Agency, 'Power Over' and 'Power To'

In order to determine the empowering potential of civic participation, I examine the motivations of participants with the concept of agency within Kabeer's framework of empowerment (2005). Agency is a key facet of the empowerment framework, defined as *"exercising choice in a way that challenges power relations"* (Kabeer, 2005, p.14). To utilize their agency to make a strategic choice, there must be multiple perceived viable options (Kabeer, 2005, p.14). For my participants to address concerns about societal or political issues affecting them, one of these choices was to be involved to varying degrees within the community and community organizations (others being, for instance, choosing not to be involved or to be involved in the formal political system). Kabeer (2005) and Mosedale (2005) detail the importance of examining how power informs what is a viable choice and shapes decisions to examine whether a choice represents agency and empowerment or is constrained. This relates to Kabeer's concept of 'Power over', in which an

actor's agency can limit another's (2005, p.14). Mosedale advocates for broadening the examination of 'Power over', in which we should not only look at where actions are constrained by those of others but look for differences in *"social entitlement and constraint and consider how entrenched and mutable such differences might be"* (2005, p. 250). The social entitlement of immigrant women is different, lesser, than that of Norwegian white women, or white men, for instance, and is significant in defining their opportunities even when those with more power may not be actively, consciously constraining their choices.

For instance, immigrant women might be constrained from civic involvement or political involvement by dominant narratives about immigrant women as voiceless, powerless, and without competencies and skills to share, which was described by my participants as a barrier to their participation (pp. 23-24). This narrative is also discussed in Roggeband & Verloo's examination of how migrant women are viewed as a "problem" to achieving gender equality in the Netherlands, and migrant women are viewed as a homogenous category who are "*traditional, poorly educated and passive*" (2007, p. 284). It also relates to how postcolonial scholars describe narratives of the "Third World Woman" who is perceived as a passive victim oppressed by tradition, culture and patriarchy (Mohanty, 2003; Radcliffe, 2015). Participants described numerous other constraining barriers, such as discrimination and exclusionary social codes (pp. 22-24), which will be discussed in more detail later.

Participants were able to persist and break down barriers that constrained their participation, representing what Kabeer terms as 'Power to', namely the power to act and make choices even when faced with opposition (2005, p.14). However, it is also important to examine a dimension of power that complicates the view of civic involvement as an empowering choice. The concept of the active citizen shows how the recasting of civic involvement by the state and dominant society as a duty rather than a right might pressure citizens to participate (Horst et al., 2019; Jdid, 2021). Governments regulate the conduct of citizens as a governmental technique through the normative shaping of "good"/active citizenship ideals (de Koning et al, 2015, p. 122). Civic organizations (such as NGOs in which participants were involved), institutions and majority society also have significant power to influence and define the active/"good" citizen norms. "Good" citizen norms, while applying to the whole population, apply more strictly to immigrants and particularly immigrant women who are seen as needing to prove their belonging to the community and the

nation through acts of contribution: as Strømsø (2019) describes, *performing* acts of contribution function as a 'ticket' to belonging.

While it is certainly positive that immigrants should have a strong political voice to advocate for their needs and interest through civic participation, the pressure to be a "good" citizen complicates the perception of civic involvement as an unquestionably empowering choice. This recognition of the role the state and powerful actors in society play in shaping civic participation represents a significant power relation that influences choices to be civically active. Additionally, the pressure placed on immigrants to prove themselves as "good" citizens has the potential to reproduce hierarchical power relations by pressuring participation in arenas and ways dictated by the state and dominant groups, as well as reproduce ableist norms (Horst et al., 2019; Jdid, 2021).

This concept is reflected in my findings. While the motivations of the participants as described above clearly show an internal drive to be involved in the community, several participants made statements indicating that they did feel a pressure to be involved. For instance, Mary indicated that she felt the pressure to be an active, "good" citizen who uses her voice in the community to affect high-level decision-making. While for Mary it is a positive motivation for her to affect change and be active in the community, she implies that by not participating, one gives up their right to complain about decisions that affect their life. In this way, Mary illustrates how the active citizenship norm recasts citizen participation as a duty rather than a right (p. 31).

To join an NGO, Andrea explained that she needed to be persistent and prove herself to overcome barriers related to a cultural distrust of new people, one that applies particularly to immigrant women that are seen as too different or viewed as someone to be helped rather than help, which can prevent some organizations from onboarding new volunteers (pp. 22-23). This statement, in which Andrea explains that she overcame these barriers, could represent Andrea exercising a high level of agency to choose to be involved despite them and in this way challenge power relations that would prevent her participation (Kabeer, 2005). However, as a well-educated native English speaker in a stable economic situation, Andrea had the ability, motivation and resources to prove her worth, this expectation also represented a barrier that not all immigrant women would easily be able to overcome. Shown here and in examinations of civic participation in other studies, the burden to be a "good" citizen rests disproportionately on immigrants who must prove that they

belong in the community and nation through acts of contribution, comes without the recognition of the added barriers they face (Horst et al., 2019; Jdid, 2021; Soysal, 2012; Strømsø, 2019).

Participation Meanings: 'Power Within' And 'Power With'

Participants also discussed how civic involvement builds their self-esteem and confidence. Several emphasized the pride that comes with having the drive and abilities to help people, and underlined the importance of providing immigrant women with tools that allow them to create their own initiatives or programs that fit their needs and allows them to develop pride and confidence in their own abilities (p. 27). Jdid similarly describes how her participants felt a sense of dignity and empowerment when they actively contributed to society despite often being seen as 'not good enough' in her examination of how citizens affirm or contest active citizenship norms in Norway and Denmark (2021, p. 201-209).

Developing their confidence expands their sense of agency and the options they see available to them. How people view themselves, their capabilities and their self-worth impacts their agency (Kabeer, 2005; Mosedale, 2005). Additionally, the meaning, motivation and purpose that individuals bring to their actions also represents their agency (Kabeer, 2005) and, along with self-esteem and self-confidence, their 'Power within' (Mosedale, 2005, p. 250). In this way, my findings in which participants discussed their personal development of confidence and self-esteem supports an interpretation of their actions through the lens of empowerment. Also relevant here is the narrative my participants discussed encountering of the immigrant woman as a victim, which influenced how others defined their capabilities (Mohanty, 2003; Radcliffe, 2015; Roggeband & Verloo, 2007). Participants found this narrative led NGOs to be unwilling or skeptical of onboarding them or utilizing their skills (pp. 23-24). Narratives such as these can sometimes be internalized and influence people's self-perception, but through building their 'Power within' and affirming their confidence in their abilities and self-worth, participants were able to challenge these norms.

Participants also discussed the benefits of gaining a social arena through civic participation. Two participants ascribed their main motivation for civic participation as being social in aim. Rosa discussed how she needed to find a community that understood her and her struggles as an immigrant woman in a way her Norwegian family and friends could not. Rosa was looking specifically for a community that shared her experiences particular to her identity and could

empathize (p. 26). Seeing that many other immigrant women had gone through the same experiences she had, helped her to understand and validate her own experiences of discrimination and inequality. This reflects how Mosedale discusses 'Power with', namely the importance of spaces and opportunities for women to meet with other women and reflect on their situation, recognizing their strengths and devise strategies to affect change (2005, p. 250). This was also reflected in the way that other participants discussed the importance of being part of a group in order to make positive change through collective action (pp. 26-27).

Peucker & Ceylan's study on Muslim community organizations adds in a similar vein to this finding; they discussed a trust, solidarity and security that minorities gain from their ties to their minority community that supports their feelings of belonging and greater involvement to society (2017, p. 2409). Therefore, according to literature and the empowerment framework, feeling understood and supported by your minority community leads to a stronger "Power with" and capacity for greater involvement and ability to make change (Mosedale, 2005; Peucker & Ceylan, 2017). By becoming part of a community that shares experiences of marginalization, participants built their capacity to make change.

With civic participation, immigrant women have the potential to ensure their voice is heard in a public arena where perspectives of the white Norwegian population are dominant. They can affect change to institutions and structures through collaboration with NGOs, and building their own NGOs as in the case of my two participants. Being involved in the community as an immigrant, in spite of the barriers they face, can in this way be viewed as an empowering choice utilizing agency. On the other hand, valorizing the active citizen and their involvement risks framing immigrants and the less active as less deserving citizens if they do not conform to the ideal (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 275). Examining whether the choice is internally motivated or is motivated by the need to conform to dominant norms (whether the choice to be involved is top-down or bottom-up), as well as the meaning participants ascribe to their participation, is crucial to examining the complexities and empowering potential within civic involvement.

7.3 Difference and Social Codes in Norway

Participants discussed the appeal of civic participation, particularly in contrast to formal political participation, as being in the flexibility of allowing them to participate in a number of ways without being stifled by the system (pp. 28-32). Participants highly emphasized the need to shrink their

difference and emphasize their similarities in order to succeed in political (and in some civic) arenas (p. 30). This finding agrees with Gullestad's examination of Nordic conceptions of equality, echoed by Strømsø. This noted uncomfortableness with difference is particularly strong in the Nordic countries, where there is a strong emphasis on equality and egalitarianism (Gullestad, 2002, p. 46; Strømsø, 2019). Gullestad explains, "*people have to feel that they are more or less the same to be of equal value*" (2002, p. 46). How people relate to egalitarianism and difference is illustrated by the Norwegian word *likhet*, meaning likeness, similarity, identity, sameness and equality. This reveals the interrelated concepts of sameness and equality embedded in the Norwegian conceptions of equality, egalitarianism and the welfare state (Gullestad, 2002, p. 46; Strømsø, 2019).

One example of this in my findings was how Andrea discussed the role of *Janteloven* in organizations. *Janteloven* refers to the well-known Norwegian concept from Sandemose's satirical novel and is utilized colloquially to refer to social codes emphasizing homogeneity; two tenets of *Janteloven* profess that one should not think they are better than anyone else or that they have anything they can teach another (Trotter, 2015). This concept was transformed to influence Norwegian nation-building by disciplining citizens to promote homogeneity (Trotter, 2015). Andrea described encountering this disciplining in her approach to certain NGOs. She found that NGO actors perceived her motivated attitude to bring her skills and strengths to the organization to be in conflict with the ideals of *Janteloven* in which one is supposed to blend in and not 'brag' about their skills (pp. 22-23). Trotter (2015) argues it is important when discussing *Janteloven* to be mindful of the way in which it is applied unevenly to the population and that *Janteloven* as a concept does not have agency of its' own; we must acknowledge the actors who utilize *Janteloven* to discipline the behavior of those who supposedly violate this code. In this case, *Janteloven* was used by actors in this NGO to discipline Andrea, an immigrant woman, into conforming to *Janteloven* principles (Trotter, 2015). These actors have the symbolic power, as privileged position-holders in civic society that conform to active citizen norms, to discipline those they perceive as violating codes of conduct and homogeneity (Bourdieu, 1991; Trotter, 2015).

While participants articulated having more ability to embrace their unique differences and viewpoints as a benefit to utilizing civic participation rather than the formal political system to influence change, they confirmed that this was also a pressure in formal civic organizations (p. 30). This finding is explained well by examining the active citizenship ideal - embedded within it

is the idea that one conforms to the democratic norms and ideals of Norway in order to integrate into society and participate in the same ways and arenas of the dominant groups (Horst et al., 2019; Jdid, 2021). Minority groups often face pressure to conform to the social codes and norms of the dominant group, particularly in formal arenas of participation.

Acknowledging the importance of informal spaces of participation adds to understanding of this. Citizenship participation is increasingly recognized in informal arenas, varying scales of spatiality and throughout citizen's everyday lives, although the legitimacy of many of these forms of participation is still contested (Cornwall, 2002; Lister, 2007). This comes partly as response to feminist theories which underline the importance of seeing informal and domestic spaces as political (Cornwall, 2002; Lister, 2007). Formal arenas of participation necessarily include an element of exclusion, "*because volunteerism is tied to formal spaces, not everyone can participate. Some may not feel that they can express themselves in such arenas because they lack language skills, or they are unfamiliar with codes of behavior.*" (Horst et al., 2019, p. 86). Additionally, Baban & Rygiel's examination of multiculturalism explains how presenting the public sphere as neutral and value-free is an illusion that can fuel further marginalization of identities that contrast with the hegemonic national identity (2014, p. 463). Any formal arena, whether civic or political in nature, can be exclusive.

Social codes and norms are often not visible as forms of exclusion because they appear as normal to those within the dominant group (Baban & Rygiel, 2014; Horst et al., 2019). This was particularly noted by Mary, who discussed how she joined an organization in which all the other members were white Norwegian women. She described it as being "*like the rotary club*", and that they had particular patterns of behavior and groupings that made her question her belonging (p. 23). Although this was not a formal element of discrimination, and was likely not an intentional exclusion, this example shows how formal arenas can privilege dominant forms of social norms in a way that invisibly makes those outside of the dominant group to feel out of place. This finding is echoed by Jupp's (2008) study of successful initiatives encouraging participation of those in disadvantaged neighborhoods in the UK; one commonality of these initiatives was that the environment made participants feel comfortable and at home, and a level of informality in interactions and definitions of participation was encouraged.

Access to Resources: Affected by Power Relations and Intersecting Identities

The above examples have also highlighted how marginalized identities, social relations and power influence access to resources, another key element of the empowerment model (Kabeer, 2005). The barriers discussed above apply to immigrant women because of their particular marginalized identities. Several participants had discussed being seen as an outsider who needs to prove their similarity and their worth to be accepted and allowed to participate (pp. 22-23). Resources (the medium through which agency is exercised) such as access to participation in certain arenas, and access to leadership positions are distributed through institutions and social relations in a society (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). Literature examining gendered civic engagement notes that "*the distribution of social and economic benefits through community… results in unequal access, with minority groups often being shortchanged*" (Herd & Meyer, 2002, p. 682). The way dominant social codes and social relations govern access to participation was detailed in the previous examples of the distrust participants noticed of their difference when seeking opportunities.

 In addition, Andrea discussed power imbalances within neighborhood organizations (a community garden and the Parent-Teacher Association), explaining that she felt she was not welcome to have a position of power in the organizations in which she volunteered due to her language skills and her position as an immigrant woman (p. 24). This finding fits with other studies' recognition of civic spaces as having the potential to reproduce inequalities and be anti-democratic as much as they have the potential to be transformative (Herd & Meyer, 2002; Horst et al., 2019; Kabeer, 2002). The narrative of the immigrant woman as a victim that was described by many participants (pp. 23-24) is also particularly relevant when discussing resources, as the way in which immigrant women are perceived as subordinate, uneducated victims of culture that do not have skills to offer NGOs influences their access to participation (Mohanty, 2003; Radcliffe, 2015; Roggeband & Verloo, 2007). These examples illustrate how access to resources is based on power relations, and highlights the importance of intersectionality; the identities of the participants as immigrants, women, and women of color all influence their ability to access resources and how people perceive their capabilities (Crenshaw, 1991). However, in spite of the challenges, my participants, as a relatively privileged group of immigrant women, were largely able to persist and break past many barriers to participate in civic organizations, hold high level positions and gain access to more and more committees and platforms, which might not have been possible for many immigrant women. Nevertheless, their ability to access resources of civic platforms for their

participation allows them to advocate for issues that matter to them, adding to representation of the interests of immigrant women in the public sphere.

7.4 Informal Participation

Much recent literature focuses on the expansion of the definition of civic participation in order to examine contested and under-represented forms included within informal participation, a project to which this study seeks to contribute (Cornwall, 2002; Horst et al., 2019; Horst & Lysaker, 2019; Isin, 2009; Jdid, 2021; Lister, 2007; Pajnik & Bajt, 2013; Wood, 2013; Zani & Barrett, 2012).While much of the participation detailed by my participants, as well-integrated individuals with high social capital, is formal participation, they also shared some interesting forms of informal participation that are worth examining. A couple of participants articulated one of the benefits of civic participation as being a more direct effect on everyday life; while the actions and effects might be smaller, they felt personal interactions and what brings joy in everyday life were neglected elements in formal politics (p. 31). Informal ways of civic participation represent a way to address this gap, as well as being an accessible, flexible way to make change in ways that matter to one in a way that uniquely suits them.

Returning to the example of Farah and her involvement in an anti-racism program shows an example of an influential, informal, contested form of participation (p. 18). While this program was run through an organization and in some ways could be designated as formal participation, it also depended upon personal interactions and dialogue to make a difference. Farah continued her interactions with the connections she made through the program after it ended. She joined this initiative in response to feeling excluded from society and unable to making friends easily with Norwegians who were intimidated or made assumptions about her as a woman of color with a visible marker (a hijab) of being Muslim. Farah's interactions with Norwegians helped her to explain and define her identity and encourage them to be comfortable with her difference. This type of social form of civic participation is discussed by Wood (2013) in her study on young people of the Pacific Island community in New Zealand. She described how teenagers in this community perceived being social and making connections with white New Zealanders as a civic duty in order to address cultural and social differences causing conflict in their communities (Wood, 2013, pp. 53-54). This is similar to the way Farah used social interactions to challenge prejudices and encourage anti-racism and social cohesion. Additional literature also notes how personal

interactions and friendship in hidden spaces can represent a commitment to the community and to creating a tolerant and inclusive society (Dyck, 2005).

To further explain the significance of such interpersonal interactions, Arendt details the importance of narrative actions, storytelling and everyday interactions to make change, describing how (in her study context) refugees *"maintained hope by recognizing that what they do makes a difference on the level of the individual: through action and speech in spaces of appearance, they are able to influence another person who may act differently as a consequence."* (Horst & Lysaker, 2019, p. 15, citing Arendt, 1943/2007). As a result of this program, Farah made many Norwegian friends, was invited to take part in their cultural celebrations and invited them to take part in her cultural celebrations. While it may seem to be a very individually-oriented action, in this way, Farah was able to negotiate her sense of belonging within Norway and the importance of her own cultural and religious traditions. Through narrative action, immigrants can insist on and define their identity and its meaning, challenge perspectives of society and influence how they are perceived. "*By expressing their identity and perspectives, they aim to claim belonging and inclusion for themselves and others in a wider community*" and through ripple effects of personal interactions, influence society (Horst & Lysaker, 2019, p. 14).

Motherhood is more contested as a form of civic duty even with the expansion of the term by active citizenship concepts. Its association with femininity and the domestic sphere means it has long been obscured as a form of participation and its value is still not often recognized. According to recent feminist literature, care work represents *"an active form of participatory citizenship with far-reaching benefits"* and should be acknowledged as an expression of important citizenship responsibilities (Herd & Meyer, 2002, p. 666; Lister, 2007). Several participants mentioned their motherhood duties as limiting their time to be involved in community activities (p. 25). Social expectations regarding reproductive roles and gendered division of labor is often discussed as a constraint to participation in public arenas (Eagly et al., 2000). However, participants also made remarks that showed how raising their children could represent a civic duty, as they are raising citizens with values of how to enact citizenship (though none presented it in this way themselves). They described how they encouraged their children to be politically and civically active and the importance of using their voice, showing the act of raising engaged citizens as a form of civic participation (p. 25). In Erel's (2011) study of migrant mothers in the UK, she describes the

significance of uncovering how immigrant mothers interact with norms and values of citizenship and belonging, contest and accept them and emphasize certain values to their children. Similarly, the way in which participants of this study discussed passing on norms of participation to their children represents a form in civic duty in how they produce citizens that can conform to the norms of active citizenship and participate in a way that pleases the state and dominant society; or have the potential to push for transformative change. As explained by Zahra, it is rare that we see all the work that immigrant women do, as much of it is undervalued or obscured, and examining more domestic and seemingly mundane tasks and arenas as sites for citizenship participation help to reveal this work (p. 27).

Dugnad: Ambiguous Perspectives

The Norwegian concept of dugnad is an interesting example to examine in terms of active citizenship. In Norway, this expectation of volunteering is a formal, organized concept required by organizations, neighborhoods, and schools, for example. Because it is conceptualized as such an intensely Norwegian concept tied to national identity and the idea of the community, dugnad can be a way to claim belonging to the nation and community through contribution, and to be claimed as a "good" citizen (Horst et al., 2019; Strømsø, 2019; Tonkens et al., 2011). Andrea discussed the concept of dugnad as a mandatory contribution that represented the burden of the demands of active citizenship and the need to prove belonging (p. 19).

However, in Shahrzad's discussion of dugnad, she highlights the potential of dugnad to be a force for change with a low threshold of accessibility for participation by immigrant women (pp. 19-20). She explained how the community mobilized in response to a family being thrown out of their home. Shahrzad described this family as having been very active in participating in previous dugnads, indicating that she believes they have proved their belonging through contribution (and a possible acceptance of the "good" citizen norm). Shahrzad highlights how the mobilization of the community through dugnad allowed them to exert significant political pressure on local politicians to instigate beneficial change for this family. Shahrzad sees dugnad more as an opportunity to demand change and help others, indicating that her presentation and conception of participation in dugnad includes within it the potential for empowerment, instigating change and challenging those in power from the bottom-up with low threshold activities of dugnad, in contrast to more critical perspectives of some literature (Horst et al., 2019).

Interestingly, Mary discusses dugnad as something that is not typically Norwegian, but something that she claims many immigrants are accustomed to and comfortable with, albeit in a less formal, organized way, *"we come from collectivistic societies. We are used to having big families, we are used to helping others, a dugnad is not something new"* (p. 20*).* This is also discussed in Horst et al. (2019), in which a participant from Pakistan describes how there are norms of participating in volunteer work for the community in Pakistan, only they are not formalized as in Norway. This formalization of volunteer work downplays individual drive and commitment, as well as excluding by necessity of being a formal arena and representing an ableist pressure to contribute (Horst et al., 2019, p. 86). These different perspectives on dugnad highlight the ambiguous dimensions of active citizenship norms; included within them is a potential for more direct, participatory democracy as well as an increased burden and value judgements placed on the immigrant that impacts how they are perceived as belonging within the community and nation.

7.5 Transformative Change?

Achievement and the Possibility of Transformative Change

While agency and resources, previously examined, makes up one's capabilities or potential to create the life they want, achievement refers to the outcome of this potential (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). In this case, outcome refers to the extent to which agency and resources are utilized by participants in order to create change and have meaningful participation in the civic arena and with their multiple ways of participation. My findings have shown how they were able to find creative ways to participate, affect change at different levels, and push through barriers in order to meaningfully participate in a way that suits their needs.

Mosedale defines women's empowerment as *"the process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them to be and do in situations where they have been restricted, compared to men, from being and doing"* (2005, p. 252). In this case, more relevant is how immigrant women broaden their possibilities in comparison to men and white Norwegians, as the barriers they face have been according to their intersecting axes of marginalization. It is important to examine how women's agency has changed as a result of women's actions; my participants, in breaking barriers with their formal participation and being highly involved in civic participation as individuals with high social capital, in turn break barriers for other immigrant women (Mosedale, 2005, pp. 255-256; Kabeer, 2002). Kabeer writes that she is interested in transformative forms of agency that

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lead to longer-term processes of change to structures of oppression (2005, p, 16). By occupying important community positions, my participants are able to take space as immigrant women, challenge traditional distributions of power and have a platform on which to express and advocate for their interests. While those benefits represent the result of participants' formal participation, informal participation also helps reconceptualize how participants' difference is viewed in society through interactions and subtle ways and allows them to insist on their identity as they understand it. In this way, participants challenge perceptions of them that limit their opportunities, further breaking down barriers for the next person.

Isin's conceptions of active citizenship and activist citizenship questions the abilities of civic participation to create real transformative change that challenges power relations. Isin argues that active citizenship (in contrast to activist citizenship) reproduces scripts from the state rather than challenging them (2009, p. 383). Cornwall (2002) also warns of mainstream appropriations of the term empowerment in relation to the spaces created or in which oppressed groups participate, critiquing that rather than giving immigrant women the resources to construct and expand the spaces they choose and develop and express their own identities, "*categories like 'the poor' or 'women' produce subjects for whom a place is sought within the prevailing order by bringing them in, lending them opportunities, inviting them to participate*". This statement emphasizes that they are invited to dominant spaces, indicating a broadening of structures rather than transforming, and limiting the potential of creating radical change. In these ways, the value of much civic participation can be questioned.

With the pressures and embedded value judgements and disproportionate burdens within the conceptions of active citizenship, it is easy to see the limitations of unproblematically viewing civic (and political) participation as inherently good. For instance, Andrea showed the way in which hierarchies were reproduced within an organization where only white Norwegian males held leadership positions (p. 24). Additionally, entering a formal arena can sometimes mean having to adapt to dominant norms, which was much discussed by participants (pp. 22-23, 30). Some participants also seemed aware of this conundrum in how they discussed the tokenism and reproduction of hierarchies within the political system; Shahrzad in particular, while previously holding an official position in a political party, felt that she could make more transformative change through civic participation when she did not have to function within the political system, one that

reproduces hierarchies in who has access to key positions and the power to make important decisions (pp. 31-32).

A choice to be involved (in the example of Kabeer (2005), to be involved in wage work; here to be involved civically) in itself is not necessarily representative of empowerment – this may represent only an additional burden. For some women, the expectation placed upon them to be civically or politically active and conform to the "good" citizen norm might in fact be preventing them from investing their time and energy into other, more empowering choices that better suits their needs. The immigrant women who feels able to resist norms of active citizenship and focus on her family, learning the language, or developing her career or her own interests might in fact feel more empowered to make a different strategic choice to achieve the life she wants. The interpretation of civic participation as empowering is extremely contextual in nature.

Horst et al. (2019), Jdid (2021) and van der Land (2014) advocate for a middle-ground perspective of active citizenship which recognizes the potential for increased democratic participation while acknowledging the elements that can reproduce hierarchical norms and normative values that hinder immigrants. Horst et al. explain that active citizenship should be *"understood as both a top-down governing discourse and a bottom-up process of citizens who take responsibility to transform society"* and that while citizens are able to exercise agency and individual initiative to make change, it is also not independent from the state and societal structures (2019, p. 78). In line with this, Cornwall (2002) acknowledges despite her critique of community participation cast in terms of empowerment that spaces of participation are ambiguous and unpredictable, *"particular spaces may be produced by the powerful, but filled with those with alternative visions whose involvement transforms their possibilities, pushing its boundaries, changing the discourse and taking control"*.

 My findings support this interpretation of the benefits and pitfalls of civic participation and reveal a complex picture of civic participation, which must be evaluated contextually on an individual basis, as seen in my participants' creative ways of participation, transformative motivations, persistence in breaking barriers, and willingness and ability to challenge dominant limiting perceptions of immigrant women in society, despite the challenges they faced.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

The main objective of this study was to examine the civic participation of immigrant women, and what strategies, arenas, and platforms they used to participate in politics and civic life in Norway. Presented in summation below are the results of my research questions and analyses.

Research Questions 1: What strategies alternative to traditional means of political participation do immigrant women in Norway use to participate in politics and what arenas and platforms do they use?

My participants used a broad range of strategies of participation. They were involved in NGOs, largely with social justice aims or that were aimed at helping immigrants and immigrant women. Participants also described founding their own organizations, such as one that produced a podcast giving advice to other immigrants on how to integrate and understand local social codes and behaviors. One participant took part in an anti-racism program in which she invited Norwegians to ask her blunt questions about being a Muslim woman in order to confront their prejudices. Additionally, several participants were involved at the neighborhood level, participating in a neighborhood committee, a community garden, in dugnad and as a member of a Parent-Teacher association for their child's school. Participants also detailed both formal and informal ways of participation. Although not always conceived of as civic participation, informal ways of participation, such as personal interactions that challenge norms and stereotypes, and raising politically and civically engaged children were revealed as an important strategy.

These forms of participation showed the political consciousness of the participants. Despite often being cast as politically apathetic, they are shown to simply participate in different ways, as their experiences as citizens with marginalized identities influenced the alternative ways and strategies they used to affect social and political change. Due to normative values and structures of power that value certain public, dominant and masculine forms of participation over others, the participation by immigrant women that is done through everyday lived experiences or in private spaces is obscured, undervalued and overlooked.

Sub-Question 1: How accessible are opportunities for immigrant women to be civically and politically active in non-traditional ways?

My findings revealed that participants generally viewed civic participation as a more accessible way to influence change and have a political voice than to be involved in the formal political system. However, participants still described numerous barriers to their participation in formal

civic arenas influenced by their identity as an immigrant woman. They named a lack of information about opportunities, low level language skills, the numerous other time and energy commitments of immigrant women, and low level of previous experience with civic participation as potential barriers. They also explained how a Norwegian distrust and uncomfortableness with difference and dominant social codes in formal arenas represented an element of exclusion in the expectation that immigrant women conform to dominant standards. How people from the dominant culture perceived immigrant women as victims and doubted their capabilities represented a barrier to participants' civic participation and ability to reach key positions. Participants were largely able to overcome these barriers, influencing perceptions of immigrant women and creating space for others to be involved.

In addition, informal and more contested ways of participation, such as the personal interactions detailed above, represented an even more accessible alternative to formal civic participation and allowed participants to affect change and challenge perceptions of them without sacrificing their unique differences.

Sub-Question 2: What makes non-traditional forms of political and civic participation more appealing to immigrant women than traditional forms of civic participation?

This sub-question is intricately combined with the previous. The barriers participants described in relation to formal political participation highlighted that they felt civic participation represented a more flexible arena for them to choose the causes that mattered to them and did not require them to shrink their differences and sacrifice their individuality. There were also fewer formal barriers to civic participation and there was a noted lower threshold to entry. As was mentioned previously, informal participation and everyday expressions of civic participation represented a more accessible and flexible form of participation.

Additionally, the motivations and ways of participation of participants was influenced by their marginalized identities; many participants' forms of involvement were focused on helping other minorities and women, which influenced the form of participation in which they involved themselves. This was shown particularly by the example of Farah, who challenged Norwegians' prejudices and stereotypes by building relationships and sharing her culture with them, and by many participants' involvement in organizations addressing social justice issues and the issues of immigrants.

Main Conclusions

It is important to examine and ensure immigrant women have accessible ways to participate. It is necessary that they are represented in the formal political system, but there are many exclusionary aspects that make immigrant women want to participate civically instead and in more informal ways. The participants that were in my study were very active in formal arenas of civic participation; however, they are generally very well-established and enumerated a number of barriers and attitudes that show why informal participation is a strategy used by many immigrant women.

Civic participation can be a good strategy to integrate, be included and to meet people who share your experiences of marginalization, as well as to affect change. Civic participation can be empowering – though this must be evaluated contextually for individuals. Across the board (both civically and politically), more inclusion and representation is necessary. But it is also important not to discount the ways immigrant women participate that is not always seen or appreciated, and how citizen participation is gendered and influenced by marginal identities. The danger of the active citizen norm, in which we place value judgements on who is a "good" citizen and who belongs based on their visible contributions on society is potentially damaging to immigrants who do not participate as much or whose participation is not seen. They have more to lose from not fitting into this norm, as their belonging can be questioned more than ontologically secure citizens.

Possibilities for Further Research

My participants were well-established with high social capital. While this study revealed the important, less visible forms of barriers and discrimination that persist even when one is "well-integrated" and in a stable position, it would be interesting for future studies to focus on newer immigrants to Norway in order to compare experiences and locate important gaps of experience missed by this study. Additionally, more studies that focus on informal and contested forms of civic participation, such as interpersonal interactions, lived experiences of citizenship and mother/parenthood as civic participation are important to conceptualizing the participation of immigrant women and the potential for transformative change.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Thematic Table

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
-Involvement in NGOs and their programs, often with social justice aims; creating NGOs/organizations *-Dugnad/Neighbourhood involvement* *-Religious organizations* *-Lobbying and letter-writing* *-Using media*	-Description of community activities	**Arenas and platforms for Civic involvement (CH.1)**
-Immigrant woman are seen as victims *-Language & Lack of information about opportunities* *- Difference is not valued* *-Distrust of new people, Janteloven and exclusionary social codes/norms* *-Power imbalances within community organizations*	-Barriers to entry and within the system (most are also barriers to traditional political participation)	**Barriers to accessibility of civic participation (CH.1)**
-Time and energy, focus on getting established *-Background of community involvement – family and origin country*	-Personal barriers	
-Making connections and being social; Need to be social and feel understood; networking; practicing language *-Building self-esteem through community participation*	-Social arena and integration & networking benefits	**Benefits of civic/non traditional forms of political participation (CH.2)**
-Not being labelled as political *-Focus on the issues that matter to you* *-Don't have to sacrifice your difference to fit into the system* *-Civic participation as sufficient to create change*	-Benefits in opposition to political participation	
-More direct effect on everyday life, micro-actions, bringing joy *-Don't have the frustration associated with hierarchy and hypocrisy of political system, escape party politics* *-Leads to access to bigger platforms*	-Judged to be more effective to create change than political participation	

Thematic Table produced through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Appendix B: NSD Ethical Clearance Form

∧SD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD's assessment

Project title

Forms of Political and Civic Participation of Migrant Women in Norway

Reference number

150038

Registered

01.11.2020 av Audrey Kathleen Geissinger - Audrey.Geisinger@student.uib.no

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

Universitetet i Bergen / Det psykologiske fakultet / Hemil-senteret

Project leader (academic employee/supervisor or PhD candidate)

Victor Chimhutu, Victor.Chimhutu@uib.no, tlf: 96884913

Type of project

Student project, Master's thesis

Contact information, student

Audrey Kathleen Geißinger, age017@uib.no, tlf: 46575874

Project period

16.11.2020 - 14.06.2021

Status

21.12.2020 - Assessed

Assessment (1)

21.12.2020 - Assessed

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 21.12.2020, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

NOTIFY CHANGES

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION
The project will be processing special categories of personal data about racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs and trade union membership, and general categories of personal data, until 14.06.2021.

LEGAL BASIS
The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn.

The legal basis for processing special categories of personal data is therefore explicit consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a), cf. art. 9.2 a), cf. the Personal Data Act § 10, cf. § 9 (2).

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA
NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS
Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES
NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT
NSD will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

Contact person at NSD: Marita Ådnanes Helleland
Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)

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Appendix C: Information Letter & Informed Consent

My name is Audrey Geißinger. I am a student at the University of Bergen completing a master's programme in Global Development Theory and Practice. I am now in the process of collecting data for my master's thesis.

The purpose of my thesis project is to examine the alternative ways immigrant women in Norway participate in political and civic life. Immigrant women are a group that face compounded challenges and generally have a lower rate of traditional means of political participation, such as voting and running for office. However, this measure does not include ways of participation outside those categories and distorts views of immigrant women's political participation and agency. I would like to examine immigrant women's participation in community organizations and interest groups, religious groups, as well as involvement in participation strategies such as boycotting, public protests, lobbying, dugnad and more. Much literature on political participation focuses either on women or immigrants as a cohesive group, and not on particular struggles of immigrant women, which is what I am interested in with this study. I will also investigate the effectiveness of community involvement in ensuring the voices of immigrant women are heard in political arenas.

Therefore, for this purpose, I would like to invite you for an interview (around 1 hour) where I will ask some questions regarding your experiences of community and political participation. Your participation in this research project will greatly contribute to the understanding of immigrant women's political interests. This research project is for academic purposes only and all information will be treated with confidentiality and your responses will be anonymized.

I have also provided a detailed information letter for this research project, including ethical considerations (NSD approval), letter of consent, etc. The interview can be scheduled digitally (through Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or any other platforms). In addition, by your request, the interview questions can be sent to you in advance and before the interview.

I would very much appreciate if you could participate in this research project and contribute to my thesis project with your insights.
Should you have any questions regarding the research project, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.
Best regards,
Audrey Kathleen Geißinger

Are you interested in taking part in the research project *"Forms of Political and Civic Participation of Immigrant Women in Norway"*?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to investigate the platforms and strategies of political participation and civic participation that are used by migrant women in Norway to voice their political opinions and needs. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project
This project is a masters' thesis for the programme "Global Development Theory and Practice" at the University of Bergen. The purpose of this project is to examine alternative methods of political and civic participation of women migrants in Norway. It is important that woman migrants have a political voice and to understand the ways in which migrant women can be politically and civically involved in Norway. These more indirect methods of participation are increasingly more common than traditional forms of participation such as voting and running for office, and this project would examine what methods are used instead.

Who is responsible for the research project?
The University of Bergen is the institution responsible for the project.

- Victor Chimhutu
  Postdoctoral fellow in the department of health promotion and development, University of Bergen

- Audrey Geißinger
  Student of MPhil in Global Development Theory and Practice, University of Bergen

Why are you being asked to participate?
I have asked you to participate as a woman migrant or woman of immigrant background that is civically and/or politically engaged. I would like to learn about what strategies and platforms you use to be politically active and express your political opinions and needs. To protect people who are not participating in the study, remember not to mention them by name or describe them with identifiable information. This project will be processing special categories of personal data about racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs and trade union membership.

What does participation involve for you?
If you choose to take part in this project, I, the student responsible for this project would like to interview you individually to collect information on your involvement in civic and political organizations and the strategies of political and civic involvement you use as a woman migrant in Norway. With your permission, I would like to record the interviews. I will transcribe these interviews and store them on my password-protected computer. I may also request to observe the political and civic activities you describe.

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous.

There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

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

Only the student and her supervisor, in connection with the University of Bergen, will have access to the personal data.

All personal information, including recorded voices, will be protected in a personal laptop that only the responsible researchers (mentioned above) have access to. Also, to store all the data, the University of Bergen's SAFE system will be used to ensure that no unauthorized persons are able to access the personal data.

The student will use the NVivo software to organize and code data. This will not be synchronized to a cloud, and only the student and the project leader will have access to the data.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?
The project is scheduled to end in June 2021. All audio files will be deleted after they were transcribed by the responsible student. Collected 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 the University of Bergen, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?
If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Audrey Geißinger,
  Student of M.Phil in Global Development Theory and Practice, University of Bergen
  Email: Audrey.Geisinger@student.uib.no

- Supervisor: Victor Chimhutu
  Postdoctoral fellow in the department of health promotion and development, University of Bergen
  Email: Victor.Chimhutu@Uib.no

- UiB Data Protection Officer: Janecke Helene Veim
  Email: personvernombud@uib.no

- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS,
  Email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no)
  Telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,
Project Leader
Victor Chimhutu

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project "Forms of Political and Civic Participation of Immigrant Women in Norway" and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

I give consent:

- to participate in an interview
- for my recorded voice to be stored until transcribed
- for the student to gather observational data of political and civic activities in which I participate

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. June 2021.

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Interview Guide Questions

Participants will be advised not to identify third persons neither directly nor indirectly. They will be asked to speak generally, without naming names.

Demographics/Background Questions:

1. What is your age?
2. Nationality?
3. Are you employed?
4. How long have you been in Norway? Are you a citizen?
5. What level of Norwegian language skill do you have?
6. To what extent do you feel integrated into Norwegian society or consider yourself Norwegian?
7. What is your level of education?
8. What group or identity do you consider yourself to be a part of? (ex. woman, specific nationality or ethnic group, Norwegian)
9. Do you come from a background where it is common to be involved in politics or the community?
10. If you grew up in another country, were you politically or civically active in your origin country?

Research Question: What strategies alternative to traditional means of political participation do migrant women in Norway use to participate in politics and civic life and what arenas and platforms do they use?

Theme: Alternative means of political participation

1. In what ways/with which organizations are you involved in the community?
2. What level is your involvement?
3. Have you (and would it be common or regular for you) to: (Please elaborate if you wish to do so).
    a. Sign or create a petition
    b. Write letters to politicians/Participate in a letter-writing campaign
    c. Be involved with a trade union, including membership
    d. Participate in or organize a political demonstration or lobbying
    e. Participate in or organize a boycott
    f. Collect money for charity
    g. Be active in a religious organization
    h. Participate in "voluntary activity focused on helping others, achieving a public good or solving a community problem, including work undertaken either alone or in cooperation with others in order to effect change"? Can you give any more examples? Have you participated in dugnad?
4. Do you see your efforts in these activities as political? Why or why not?
5. If you have not been involved in the previous efforts, would you ever participate in them? Why or why not?

6. Do you think you your level of community and political involvement is similar or different to other immigrant woman (and a woman of your country of origin/background)?

Sub-Objective 1: How accessible are opportunities to be civically and politically active in non-traditional ways?

Theme: Accessibility to community organizations, communities, and being politically active

1. How did you become involved in community activities?
2. From what platform or connection did you first become aware of or interested in the community organizations or groups you are a part of? (From friends, Facebook, etc).
3. How open are community organizations? What factors influence membership?
     a. Are their hierarchical structures? What does leadership distribution look like, re: immigrants and immigrant women?
4. Do you feel there is an interest group or community that fits your needs? How difficult is it to find organizations that fit your interests and that you feel belonging in?
5. Do you feel barriers to being involved in the local community or community organizations?
6. Do any personal responsibilities limit the time you have to participate in the community?
7. Do you feel your activities in the community give you access to make connections with or discuss with ethnic Norwegians?
8. How segregated are your community organizations and are Norwegians open to being involved with or meeting with immigrant community organizations and leaders?
     a. What significant lines of segregation do you see in the community?
9. Do you see that there is a higher rate of community involvement among migrant women rather than migrant men?
10. Do you see any barriers to community (or political) involvement that are specific to women?
11. Which do you think informs more of your experiences in the context of Norwegian community involvement, your identity as an immigrant or as a woman? Or is one not more central over the other? Are they inseparable from one another?

Sub-Objective 2: How do these women perceive the effectiveness of these platforms and strategies in creating change based on their needs?

Theme: Effectiveness of alternative means of political participation

1. Do you feel your activities in the community are an effective way of creating change relating to the issues that matter to you?
2. Do you think that through your community activities/involvement with community organizations you can influence local (or regional or national) politics?
3. How would you recommend someone else who wants to make policy change in Norway (or local or regional government) to approach it? What tools and platforms should they use?

Sub-Objective 3: How is engagement in civic life or indirect political participation related to involvement in traditional political participation? What barriers prevent migrant women from being politically active in traditional ways (voting, running for office, etc.) and make non-traditional forms of political and civic participation more attractive?

Theme: Traditional vs Alternative methods of political participation for immigrant women

1. What was your purpose in becoming involved in the community/community organizations?
2. Do you perceive your actions and involvement as a form of political participation?
3. Do you (or are you allowed to) vote? Do you think voting is an effective way to create change and make yourself heard in Norwegian society?
4. Do you consider yourself interested in politics? Why or why not? (Prompt: If no, is the decision to abstain from politics political in itself?)
5. Have you seen other immigrant women run for office (at any level, local, national, regional etc.)?
6. Does running for office seem like it would ever be possible for you personally? Why/Why not?

Theme: Intersectionality and Politics

1. Do you think immigrant voices are represented in the Norwegian political system?
2. Do you think the voices of immigrant *women* are represented in the Norwegian political system?
3. Do you think having immigrant male politicians in office leads to the issues of immigrant women being represented in politics?
4. Do you think that there are particular interests that aren't covered by immigrant men?
5. Do you feel your political interests are represented by Norwegian female politicians?
6. Do you think that there are particular interests that aren't covered by Norwegian women?

Appendix E: Example of Co-Coding

Interviewer: How open do you feel are community organizations and opportunities to be involved for immigrant women?

Participant: "…_the issue with, especially Norway, is somehow they have built a narrative that migrants need help, they are like the victims, and then you give them like, an offer, so when you go to an NGO, you see that they would rather give you an offer than say, like, you have a competence, you have something that is so good, you can do that, but I would rather help you. And this is something that they never discuss either, and if I hadn't worked with NGOs for so many years, I would neither have reflected on that. But, it's the "victiming", you know, you are a victim, you need help, and most of the people don't need that kind of help, they would rather say, I have a competency, I want to use that, I want to help people, I have a drive_."

Coder 1	Coder 2	Finalized code
Outside of the dominant migrant woman narrative	Victimization of immigrants – biased perception	Immigrant women are seen as victims