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How do integration workers give meaning to the term integration and the politics that is attached to it in today's Norway?

Master's thesis in Equality and diversity

Supervisor: Guro Korsnes Kristensen

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
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Læringsmål

Læringsutbytte

En student som har fullført programmet, forventes å ha oppnådd følgende læringsutbytte, definert i kunnskap, ferdigheter og generell kompetanse:

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Abstract

This master's thesis is a qualitative study that examines how integration workers give meaning to the term integration and the politics that is attached to it in today's Norway. By using thematic analysis to categorize the themes in the material, I aim to show how different meanings and understanding are attached to the term integration based on the context. The analysis is based on seven interviews conducted with seven integration workers working in the same municipality. The data was gathered within a span of a few months in 2017. Based on the analytical terms, integration and assimilation, social identity theory, sameness as an ideal and minoritizing and majoritizing, I analyze how integration is understood by integration workers, as well as the effects that emerge from these understandings. Personal understandings of integration, understandings of integration produced through my informants' work and understandings of integration produced in relation to gender are discussed to shed light on the overarching question.

Integration, as research shows, is an ambiguous term that is used to mean different things. I look at this term from the perspective of integration workers who have direct contact with participants of the introduction program. Exploring their understandings is essential because of my informants' position as street-level bureaucrats with discretion and autonomy.

Even though the characteristics attributed to integration in my informants' initial definitions lean towards social integration, the analysis shows that the term shifts meaning depending on the topic being discussed. The understanding of integration that is produced by my informants' work indicates that integration is equated with employment and economic independence. On the other hand, when gender is the topic, integration is equated with imitating the Norwegian form of gender equality.

The different understandings of integration given by integration workers indicate that the term is not only ambiguous but is also defined in radically different ways by the same informants depending on the topic at hand.

Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven er en kvalitativ studie som undersøker hvordan integreringsarbeidere gir mening til begrepet integrering og den politikken som er knyttet til begrepet i dagens Norge. Ved å bruke tematisk analyse til å kategorisere temaene i materialet, tar jeg sikte på å vise hvordan ulike betydninger og forståelse er knyttet til begrepet integrering basert på konteksten. Analysen er basert på syv intervjuer utført med syv integreringsarbeidere som jobber i samme kommune. Dataen ble samlet inn i løpet av noen få måneder i 2017. Basert på analytiske begreper, integrering og assimilering, sosial identitetsteori, likhet som ideal og minorisering og majorisering, analyserer jeg hvordan integrering forstås av integreringsarbeidere, samt effektene som kommer fra disse forståelsene. Personlige forståelser av integrering, forståelser av integrering produsert gjennom mine informanternes arbeid og forståelser av integrering produsert i forhold til kjønn diskuteres for å belyse det overordnede spørsmålet.

Integrering, som forskning viser, er et tvetydig begrep som brukes til å bety forskjellige ting. Jeg ser på dette begrepet fra integreringsarbeidernes perspektiv som har direkte kontakt med deltakere i introduksjonsprogrammet. Å utforske deres forståelser er avgjørende på grunn av informantens posisjon som bakkebyråkrater med diskresjon og autonomi.

Selv om egenskapene som tilskrives integrering i mine informanternes innledende definisjoner lener seg mot sosial integrasjon, viser analysen at begrepet skifter mening avhengig av temaet som diskuteres. Forståelsen av integrering som produseres av mine informanternes arbeid tyder på at integrering er likestilt med sysselsetting og økonomisk uavhengighet. På den annen side, når kjønn er tema, er integrering likestilt med å etterligne den norske formen for kjønnslikestilling.

De ulike forståelsene av integrering gitt av integreringsarbeidere indikerer at begrepet ikke bare er tvetydig, men også defineres på radikalt forskjellige måter av de samme informantene avhengig av emnet.

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Meron Afeworki Gebreyohannes. Trondheim, august 2022

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1 Introduction

Integration: Today's mantra?

Integration is a topic of interest in today's world where migration is an ever-increasing phenomenon that is changing the homogeneous make up of societies. The migratory pattern, especially to Europe has had different forms and phases. Following the outcomes, which are multicultural societies, integration has become a relevant issue and a political goal in many states. Integration is today's mantra: A goal for politicians, a case for journalists and a topic for social scientists and debaters (Døving, 2009, p.7).

Integration is also a topic of interest in Norway as in other countries. Research within the field can contribute to the body of knowledge that exists on the topic. It is very often discussed in the media, debated on government level and within the society. According to SSB (2022), it is estimated that there are 819 356 first generation immigrants in Norway. Getting newcomers to integrate into the local society and into the work force is often discussed. Gullestad (2002) explains that even if the number of immigrants is relatively low compared to some other countries in Europe, the debates about immigrants are relatively higher.

One of the major themes in the public debate is how those who have immigrated are doing, and how their presence affects the Norwegian society and the many local communities where they live their lives (Sætermo, Gullikstad & Kristensen, 2021, p.12). Although integration of immigrants as politics, concepts and social phenomena may seem explored, the topic needs more research, and then primarily in the form of critical studies that ask new questions and challenge established truths (ibid., p.9). Studies of migrant integration often focus on differences between groups – in particular, between ethnic minority groups and the majority population (Erdal & Oeppen, 2013). This approach has been criticised for essentializing or culturalizing nationality and/or ethnicity in relation to both the majority population, who are never one homogenous entity, and minority groups (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). This tendency is also seen in public debates about migrants' (lacking) ability or interest in adapting to the so-called Norwegian value or norm of gender equality. For example, both popular and political discussions about migrant women's lower degree of participation in the labour market, (high) fertility numbers, arranged marriages and use of hijab produce gender equality as a national/ethnic value that contrasts 'the immigrants' values' (Annfelt & Gullikstad 2013; Kristensen, 2010).

In this thesis, the focus will not be on the immigrants, but on the integration workers, which can be said to be a crucial group for the immigrants in how they will experience their new society. Because of their high level of discretion and autonomy as street-level bureaucrats who have direct contact with participants of the introduction program, their understanding of the term is of great significance in how integration work is conducted. This thesis will explore the term integration from their perspective to understand how they give meaning to the term and the politics that is attached to it.

In addition to exploring how integration workers understand integration personally and through how they conduct their work, the thesis will also explore which understanding of integration is produced by integration workers in relation to gender/gender equality. This is because of the importance gender equality in the Norwegian society. Gender equality is something Norwegians have struggled to achieve for a long time. Hagemann (2005) quotes Nielsen (1904) who explains that freedom and independence was neither handed down to Norwegian women as a fund nor was it given to them as a gift. Freedom was won through work and struggle. Gender equality is therefore one of the core values of Norwegian society. Norway has a well-established consensus connected to the ideal about an equal society (Spilker & Lie, 2016). Norway is perceived as a pioneer nation in gender equality, and gender equality is at the core of Norwegian cultural identity (Berg, Flemmen & Gullikstad, 2010; Danielsen, Larsen & Ovesen, 2015, Gullestad, 2002; Kristensen, 2010, 2016). Spilker & Lie (2016) mention that the word 'equal' or 'lik' (in Norwegian) means both having the same worth and being the same. Therefore, equality within the context of meaning sameness becomes more worthy and used in the Norwegian context. They further explain that the Norwegian model of gender equality is based on sameness of the sexes and not difference. That means that Norway's perspective of gender equality seeks to provide the same opportunities for both women and men. Women are encouraged to pursue careers and earn their own income and men on the other hand are encouraged to participate more in housework and the raising of children. Kristensen (2016) describes this model as the double carer/double earner model where the ideal is the existence of two providers and two carers in the same household. Gender equality has been established as a central aspect of the national self-understanding, as a trait of the common 'we', where being Norwegian in many ways means being equal (Kristensen, 2010, p.72). How does this core value of gender equality influence integration work? Are newcomers required to implement the same form of gender equality in order to be considered integrated? Most importantly, what does that say about how integration workers understand integration? Part of integration is adapting to the values of the host society. So, it would be interesting to find out whether expectations of gender equality are placed on newcomers in order to get them to integrate into the society.

1.1 Street-level bureaucrats

This thesis is based on the information provided by integration workers who can be categorized as street-level bureaucrats. Lipsky (1980), who wrote about the concept of street-level bureaucracy explains that public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work are called street-level bureaucrats. He also mentions that social workers are among typical street-level bureaucrats and elaborates that in delivering policy, street-level bureaucrats make decisions about people that affect their life chances. The policy-making roles of street-level bureaucrats are built on two interrelated facets of their positions: relatively high degrees of discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority (ibid.). Johannessen (2019) writes that street-level bureaucracy is one of the most influential approaches for studying how public policy is translated into street-level practice. Evans & Harris (2004) explain that in today's circumstances, Lipsky's work provides a useful set of tools with which to analyze the construction of discretion. Throughout the thesis, we see how the understandings of integration workers of the term integration affects the life chances of the participants of the introduction program. It is evident that even though policies that dictate their work influence their understandings,

they also have high degrees of discretion and relative autonomy leading them to develop different understandings of what their work entails or the reason behind it. Evans and Harris (2004) support this idea by saying that even though the broad shape of the social worker's practice is set within a framework shaped by law, policy and managers, it is an unwarranted assumption to present this framework as coherent, complete and unambiguous and as being understood in the same way by all those involved with it.

1.2 The introduction program

This thesis is based on interviews with integration workers who facilitate the introduction program. The introduction program is regulated by the Introduction Act. The purpose of this Act is to strengthen the possibility of newly arrived immigrants' participation in professional and social life, and their economic independence (Introduksjonsloven, 2003 § 1). The introductory program and training in Norwegian and social studies are the most important tools to help achieve the political goal of newly arrived immigrants quickly entering and remaining in working life. The integration policy is in constant development to respond to the need for a targeted policy in the area. Since its entry into force on 1 August 2003, the Introduction Act has been amended several times (IMDi, 2016). According to the law, the introduction program includes almost everyone who comes from areas outside the Nordic region and the EEA (European Economic area)/EFTA (European Free Trade Association) areas and who are not migrant workers. The introduction program can vary in content. It must be individually arranged and must primarily familiarize the newcomers with Norwegian society, the Norwegian language and Norwegian working life. The intention is that they must be eligible for ordinary work or education immediately afterwards (Berg & Kristiansen, 2010, p.239).

As Lipsky (1980) argues, in street-level bureaucracies, the major dimensions of public policy are shaped by policy elites and political and administrative officials. My informants are integration workers or street-level bureaucrats who work as advisors for participants of the introduction program. Their job as integration workers is precisely to fulfill the political goals of the introduction program mentioned above.

1.3 How integration is understood

As mentioned above, integration is a major theme in today's Norway. Nevertheless, the term integration is used in many ways which makes it an ambiguous term loaded with different meanings. The ambiguity of the concept of integration lies in its differential acceptance and understanding by different users (Anthias, Kontos & Morokvasic-Muller, 2013, p.1). Integration is a multifaceted task and what the term means has been a subject of discussion. Døving (2009) mentions that the term has not gotten an unambiguous ideological content. Integration used about the relationship between minorities and majorities has gradually become a general concept in both politics and research and the idea of integration as the desirable relationship has been little challenged. However, integration is a problematic and vague concept. This is partly due to the fact that it has also become part of everyday language and partly because it is a concept that is filled with different meanings (Olwig og Pærregaard, 2011; Rytter, 2019 as cited in Sætermo, Gullikstad & Kristensen, 2021).

The term integration is difficult perhaps first and foremost because it is used in so many ways (Djuve & Grødem, 2014, p.12). Some also consider the process of integration as a means and not an end in itself. Integration is presumably rather a way than a clear goal

(Døving, 2009, p.11). For that reason, some have avoided using the term, integration and instead called it incorporation. The process is most referred to as 'integration', but this can imply a specific idea of where the process should lead (Castles, Miller & De Haas, 2014, p.265). Rugkåsa (2012) explains that in Norwegian politics, integration of ethnic minorities is defined both as a goal and a process.

In some contexts, it is used broadly and used to indicate that it is a process by which a person gets a sense of belonging or fits in the host society. Integrate is an active verb. We get it from Latin. It means "to make whole". We have largely retained the meaning of the term. We use it to add parts to a whole or a unit. When something is outside, it should fit in (Døving, 2009, p.8-9). In other contexts, it is equated with participation in the labor market. Haaland, Magnussen & Wallevik (2021) point out that research has shown that in the Norwegian narrative or dominant discourse on integration, integration is defined first and foremost as paid work. That is also very evident in political discussions and written documents about integration as incorporation into the labor market is almost equated with integration. In some other contexts, it is almost equated with assimilation meaning that the person is expected to completely adapt to the norms and values of the host society in order to be integrated. Although, the word assimilation is not used, there is research that indicates that there are many practices that are geared towards such an approach. Døving (2009) points out that because of a cultural understanding based on essentialism, what is often called integration in today's Norway, entails assimilation and discrimination of immigrants.

The term remains ambiguous as it is used in different ways and given different meanings. Integration workers are street-level bureaucrats or front-line workers who work directly with the targeted group. My aim is to find out what the term integration means to them and explore the term from their perspective.

1.4 Previous research

Haaland, Magnussen & Wallevik (2021) explain how the narrative told by street-level bureaucrats is influenced by dominant understandings of refugees and integration. This means that existing narratives about integration have an implication on how integration workers understand the term. Kristensen & Sætermo (2021) conducted research in two small municipalities in Norway to find out what narratives were told by integration workers about integration. Since there were better opportunities to find jobs in one of the municipalities, the municipality got more recognition for being successful with integration work. As the study shows, employment and residing in one municipality for a long period of time were considered indications of success. In the other municipality, even though refugees were able to integrate socially in the community, that was not considered as successful since they eventually moved to other places because of the lack of opportunities to find jobs. Some of the integration workers interviewed for the study express their concerns that other forms of integration than employment were not given the same value. In another study of integration workers, Sætermo (2021) explains that the daily practice of refugee workers takes place in a complex field of work where different regulations, guidelines, rights, and registration practices must be understood, handled and adapted locally. The study concludes that integration work is conducted differently in Norwegian municipalities. It also argues that this must be seen in light of the fact that the work plays out in overlapping fields of tension between national politics and local factors, between implementation and discretionary interpretation, and between

empathy and professionalism. According to the study, Refugee workers' understandings of integration work both create and are shaped by these contradictions.

The thesis, as mentioned, will also explore integration in relation to gender/gender equality. The expectations integration workers have from men and women and the gender-based dynamics between integration workers and the participants of the introduction program are good grounds for exploring what understanding of integration is produced by integration workers. Many European countries have gender equality as a political goal and take pride in the fact that they have achieved a high level of gender equality. In fact, part of the information when immigrants and especially refugees arrive to these countries is that they have now come to a country where gender equality is the norm. Vuori (2009) gives a good example taken from a Finnish booklet for immigrants where they are informed that gender relations are based on the principle of equality and that men and women have equal rights in families, in politics, in education, at work and at leisure. The booklet goes on to give supporting statistics about the success of women in Finland.

Norway has also similar values with regard to gender equality. Research about integration shows that sameness or having the same values/way of life is a desired outcome. This is especially apparent when gender equality is the theme. Gullikstad & Kristensen (2021) based on interviews with mayors of Norwegian municipalities, explain that sameness is the ideal that is sought for in the work with integration and that gender equality is considered as a Norwegian culture some immigrants need to learn.

Discourses about integration and gender equality are also influenced by stereotypes and generalizations about the practices of immigrant men and women. In a study about gender equality and multiculturalism based on political documents in Nordic countries, Langvasbraten (2008) writes that the focus on ethnic minority women is very problem-oriented and there are no reflections made on intersectionality. Instead of being integrated in the overall action plans targeted at violence against women, the problems assumed to be specific for women and girls of ethnic minority backgrounds, such as forced marriages, and genital mutilation in particular, are totally separate. Anthias, Kontos & Morokvasic-Muller (2013) argue that migrant women as a group are perceived/targeted as unwanted and as a burden as they are stereotypically considered as the most potentially deficient in integration. Annfelt & Gullikstad (2013) write that gender equality policy is primarily based on ethnic Norwegian women and explain that gender mainstreaming as a strategy has not succeeded in establishing a gender and gender equality understanding that includes non-culturalizing multidimensionality.

1.5 The questions the thesis tries to answer and its structure

The main question the thesis tries to answer is:

How do integration workers give meaning to the term integration and the politics that is attached to it in today's Norway?

It will explore integration from their perspectives to find out what understanding of this ambiguous term they have. As street-level bureaucrats who facilitate integration work, their understanding of the term is of crucial importance to how the work is conducted. As Lipsky (1980) explains, street-level bureaucrats have discretion and autonomy. The state

actively works to integrate newcomers into the society by the help of front-line workers who implement the laws but what is integration to them and is their personal understanding of the term in line with the politics in Norway that dictates how they should execute their work?

To answer this overarching question, I have formulated three sub-questions that direct attention to different aspects. The first question is what integration means to them. The second is, what understanding of integration is produced by the way they conduct their work. To find that out, I ask about what they emphasize on in their work with integration and who they consider as integrated. The third question is what understanding of integration is produced by the way they conduct their work in relation to gender/gender equality. To find that out, I explore their dynamics with participants of the introduction program and their expectations from immigrant men and women.

In the next chapter, I will explain the theoretical perspectives on which the analysis is based where integration and assimilation, social identity theory, sameness as an ideal and minoritizing and majoritizing have provided guidelines for my analytical approach to the material. In the method section, I will present the research process and the relevant material for the thesis. The analysis chapters are divided into three with the themes 'the term integration', 'integration in practice' and 'understandings of integration in relation to gender'. In the first part of the analysis, I will explore the personal understandings of the term that integration workers have. In the chapter about what integration means in practice, I will explore which understandings of the term are produced by the way integration workers conduct their work. In the analysis of how gender is made relevant, I will explore which understandings of integration are produced in relation to gender/gender equality. The concluding chapter will summarize the main findings in the analysis chapters and suggest possible conclusions to the issues.

2 Theoretical perspectives

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the aim of this thesis is to understand how integration workers give meaning to the term integration and the politics that is attached to it in today's Norway. In order to analyze the empirical material that I have gathered, I used thematic analysis. I will present a more detailed description of thematic analysis in the next chapter but as Braun & Clarke (2006) explain, thematic analysis is one of the methods that are essentially independent of theory and epistemology and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches. Using thematic analysis has helped me to identify common themes that are found in the interviews. To better understand these common themes and shed light on them, I have selected some terms/theories. In this chapter, I will present the theories that are used as the basis of the analysis in the thesis. I will first present integration and assimilation which are theoretical terms that are often used in the discourse about immigrants and their relationship to their host society. Because of the ambiguous nature of the term integration, I have used the distinctions, social integration and system integration which are obtained from Mikkelsen (2008). The theoretical perspectives on integration and assimilation will draw attention to different approaches that fit with the definition of integration given in this chapter and how sometimes, what is referred to as "successful" integration can in fact be assimilation. I will then present social identity theory which clarifies how individuals perceive themselves as group members and how intergroup discrimination takes place. That will illustrate how certain behaviors are expected from members of certain groups. Another perspective that is apparent throughout the thesis is sameness as an ideal. The term will be useful for understanding how integration workers consider themselves as 'us' and how they consider participants of the introduction program (immigrants) as 'them'. The data contains several references to how immigrants should be the same as the majority in order to be integrated. This is especially apparent in discussions about gender and gender equality as the concept of sameness is legitimized by depicting the norms and values of the majority as better. At the end of the chapter, I will present the terms minoritizing and majoritizing, because they confirm the underlying power relations that define who is 'us' and who is 'them'.

2.1 Integration and assimilation

Integration and assimilation are two of the common concepts that are often mentioned in discourses about immigrants and their relationship to their host country/society. In sociological theory, integration is described both as a process and a societal condition. A state of integration is a state in which all the participants in a social system are part of a closed whole. Integration as a process describes how the participants are made or make themselves part of this whole (Østerberg, 1977, p.22-23). We can say that integration is generally understood as a shared responsibility. Okin (1999) supports the idea that assimilationist expectations are now often considered oppressive and that western countries are trying to be more responsive to cultural differences. Immigrants are now even encouraged to preserve parts of their identity by way of state-funded mother-tongue classes, cultural arrangements and the like. Castles, Miller & De Haas (2014) mention the alternative view that migrant communities need their culture and languages to develop identity and self-esteem. This supports the notion that states consider

integration as an outcome of a partial cultural preservation and adaptation to new norms and values at the same time. The word assimilation means to merge and to make the same. When an individual has acquired the norms, values and lifestyle of the majority, he/she is assimilated. There is nothing wrong with an individual assimilating based on her/his own choice but as politics, assimilation is problematic (Døving, 2009, p.9). Mikkelsen (2008) explains that assimilation implies that in social, cultural, economic, and political terms the immigrants become like the majority, voluntarily or forced, although with a significant emphasis on the latter. He further elaborates that assimilation is tantamount to a one-sided process of adaptation on the part of immigrants, which leaves little room for deviation in terms of ways of life, religion, language, and values. Anthias, Kontos & Morokvasic-Muller (2013) explain that the notion of assimilation assumes a core center of universal values in the society and that the normal and desirable path is to assimilate. It has been illustrated through research that what is called integration can in fact be assimilation as it entails placing expectations on minority groups to adapt the norms and values of the majority. Gullestad (2002) has written extensively on the topic.

As integration is an ambiguous and broad term that is used to mean many different things, I have also used Mikkelsen's (2008) distinction between social integration and system integration to categorize the responses from integration workers.

As illustrated above, integration and assimilation are two different concepts or strategies. In the data material for the thesis, there are different descriptions of integration. It can be said that some align with the definition of integration provided here while others align with assimilation. These two analytical terms will, therefore, be useful to understand the discussions with the informants.

2.2 Social identity theory

I was inspired by social identity theory in my analysis. Although developed primarily by psychological social psychologists, social identity theory has always had the potential to engage sociologists' interests (Hogg & Ridgeway, 2003, p.97). Social identity theory was initially formulated to account for the unexpected finding that people tend to display intergroup discrimination in so called minimal groups (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy & Flament, 1971). This initial finding prompted Tajfel to develop the original foundations of social identity theory, connecting three social-psychological processes, namely:

Social categorization- the tendency for people to perceive themselves and others in terms of particular social categories, instead of as separate individuals.

Social comparison- the tendency to assess the relative worth of groups as well as individuals by comparing them on relevant dimensions with other groups.

Social identification- the notion that people do not generally relate to social situations as detached observers, but, instead, their own identity is typically implicated in their perceptions of, and responses to, the social situation (Haslam, Knippenberg, Platow & Ellemers, 2003).

In social identity theory, a social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or a group (Hogg & Abrams 1988, as cited in Stets & Burke, 2000, p.225). A social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or

view themselves as members of the same social category. Through a social comparison process, persons who are similar to the self are categorized with the self and are labeled the in-group; persons who differ from the self are categorized as the out-group (Stets & Burke, 2000, p.225). Skytte (2008) explains that expectations are attached to the various central social categories about how the members within the individual category should behave. She further elaborates that systematization of our social world through social categories also has the function of forming the basis for the development of social affiliation and social communities as well as hindering the development of community and solidarity. There is a differentiation between us, we the group and all other groups. Pakistanis behave in one way, Norwegians in another.

In my analysis, I make use of this theory to display how integration workers perceive themselves as members of a social group and expect certain types of behaviors from participants of the introduction program because that is how people from those groups supposedly act. The theory is useful in understanding how integration workers perceive individuals as representatives of their group and not as individuals acting on their own accord. They also assess the worth of other groups by comparing it to the Norwegian society which is depicted as having higher values. On the other hand, the Norwegian society also gets its higher value by being compared to the other groups which are depicted as lacking in some areas like gender equality or proper modes of behavior. These attitudes indicate a differentiation between the Norwegian society and all other groups which are often considered as homogenous. The existence of some requirements or prerequisites for integration assist in who gets to be in the in-group and who remains in the out-group. Immigrants who adapt or mimic certain norms and values are considered as integrated meaning that they can to a certain degree be considered as insiders.

2.3 Sameness as an ideal

Gullestad (2002) illustrates that the word for equality and similarity is the same in Norwegian. She explains that people often must feel like they are the same in order to feel like they fit together and that these tendencies are especially strong in the Nordic countries. Sameness often implies that there is a problem when other people are perceived as different. Difference is seen as a deficiency. The one who is different lacks something essential (ibid. p.83). When sameness is a central value, differences between people will have to be toned down (Berg & Kristiansen, 2010, p.228). Gullestad (2006) explains that there is an 'imagined sameness' in which commonalities are emphasized while differences are played down, and that the differences between 'Norwegians' and 'immigrants' have become discursively salient. The ideal of 'imagined sameness' (same worth understood as sameness) means that it is important that social boundaries remain invisible as much as possible, while the debates on 'immigration' make them visible in ways that are perceived as problematic. 'Immigrants' are often referred to in passive form: 'they' should be integrated. People from very different backgrounds, expertise and experience are often categorized as the same by virtue of their difference with 'Norwegians' (Gullestad, 2002, p.116).

In my analysis, I illustrate how this way of thinking is bound to influence integration work as people who are considered different are encouraged/advised to fit in by being the same with the majority. In my analysis of discourses about gender equality, integration workers paint a picture of the Norwegian society as being the same/having the same

values. Practices that deviate from those values are therefore considered as deficient. There is a rhetoric that says that 'we' don't do things that way. So, newcomers need to do things the same way to be integrated or to be a part of 'us'. This is most evident in discourses about gender and gender equality where the informants highlight various aspects that are considered acceptable and desirable in the Norwegian society, such as how the opposite sexes interact with each other, family dynamics and the roles of men and women. The integration workers that I interviewed had the opinion that most people who lived in Norway possessed these values and the rest aspired to them. Immigrants are expected to be aspire to the same values. Sameness as an ideal will illustrate how my informants relate to participants of the introduction program, and how this way of thinking governs relationships.

That leads me to my next topic which is integration and assimilation as ideas about homogeneity and sameness often lead to assimilationist strategies.

2.4 Minoritizing and majoritizing

Even though the concepts mentioned above can help us understand the dynamics between the majority and the minority, to understand how members of the majority possess a certain defining power about who is 'us' and who is 'them', I find it appropriate to use the terms minoritizing and majoritizing. Gullestad (2006) elaborates that the relations between the majority and the minority are intrinsically unstable power relations. Andenæs (2010) writes that the terms are obtained from Brah (2003), who uses the terms majority and minority, not necessarily related to how many there are in one or the other category, but to the localization of a normal center that distinguishes something or someone like the 'other' in the sense of different, subordinate, or problematic. She uses the term minoritizing and the processes that produce the 'other' in this way. At the same time, as someone becomes a minority through distance from the normative center, something else becomes a majority through their proximity to what is obviously correct or normal. Brah (2003) indicates that people are 'minoritized' through processes meaning that it is something that one becomes rather than is. Stæunes (2003) also illustrates that one becomes a minority or a majority through processes and interactions. Gullestad (2002) argues that the majority decide where, when, and how the categorical differences between Norwegians and immigrants are to be made relevant.

In my analysis, the concepts have been useful to see how integration workers 'minoritize' others through discourses about who 'they' are, and that tells us something about who holds the defining power based on some characteristics/perceived characteristics. This gives insight into the construction of the "minority" through existing stereotypes, rhetoric, and interactions. The terms refer to the fact that being a minority is not necessarily about numbers nor is it static. This implies something relational where one is 'minoritized' through power relations which in turn sets the majority as the norm.

3 Method

In this chapter, I will describe, and reflect on, the methodological approach used for gathering and analyzing the data. As the goal is to deepen the existing research about the term integration by looking at it from the perspective of integration workers, I found it appropriate to conduct a qualitative study based on interviews with integration workers. As I will elaborate more on later, qualitative methods are best suited to explore opinions, experiences, and understandings. The aim of this thesis is to find out how integration workers give meaning to the term integration and the politics that is attached to it in today's Norway. Conducting interviews is therefore instrumental in exploring the topic in depth from their point of view. Therefore, in this chapter I will first provide a general description of qualitative methods and qualitative interviews. Furthermore, I will present the informants and provide insight into the work they do. I will then say something about consent and the information provided to the informants beforehand. Another thing I had to reflect on was my choice of English as a writing language for my thesis. I will elaborate on how I have managed to use Norwegian for the interviews and English for writing the thesis and whether this has affected my work in any way. In addition, I will write about the ethical questions that I encountered in the process. Those questions have to do with my position as a researcher, co-worker of the informants and as a member of the minority group that my informants shared their opinions and experiences about. Here, I do not mean a specific ethnic minority group, but the group 'immigrants' that is often talked about as a homogenous group in contrast to Norwegians. At the end, I will present thematic analysis which is the method I used to categorize and analyze the data.

3.1 Qualitative methods

This thesis is a qualitative study. Its aim is to explore the informants' understandings, opinions and experiences on the subject matter which is integration. It is based on in-depth interviews with the informants. All the data was gathered through direct contact and conversation. Qualitative methods possess some characteristics that separate them from other methods. They are best suited for certain types of research. This thesis seeks to understand the opinions, experiences, feelings and thought processes of integration workers. The concept of qualitative methods is, as is well known, a collective term for the methods that primarily seek to analyze social and psychological phenomena in depth (Aune, 2008, p.1). By the term "qualitative research," we mean any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.10-11). Qualitative methods seek to go in depth and emphasize on meaning (Thagaard, 2003, p.16). Among other characteristics of qualitative research are the need to understand social phenomena, the ability to give insight to other people's lives, the focus on process and meaning, the analysis of text, nearness to the informants and a limited number of informants (ibid.).

This thesis possesses the characteristics of a qualitative research mentioned above. It is all about understanding integration from the perspective of integration workers based on their opinions and experiences. A quantitative method where the focus is on numbers and measurable units will therefore not be suitable. A qualitative method is best suited for a project like this.

3.2 Qualitative interviews

This thesis is based on interviews with seven integration workers. The method used to collect data from my informants is interview. Interviews are the most widely used method of collecting qualitative data. It is a flexible method that can be used almost everywhere and makes it possible to obtain full and detailed descriptions (Johannessen, Tuftes & Christoffersen, 2010, p.135). Tangaard & Brinkmann (2012) write that through interview, a detailed analysis of a group of people's experiences of specific events and situations can be presented. The number of informants should be determined in relation to the interview projects' framework, duration and resources. They also suggest that as a basic rule, it is better to conduct relatively few interviews and analyze these. Since I am conducting qualitative research where the information is gathered from seven employees of one municipality, my choice of method fits that description. The aim is to find out people's understandings, experiences, and opinions. The data only reflects what the informants believe to be true about the subject of integration based on their own assessments and experiences. Qualitative interviews can give an insight about the informants understanding of his/her situation and experience and the informant can reflect over his/her experiences (Thagaard, 2003, p.12). Staunæs and Søndergaard (2005) also explain that the method interview is suitable for unfolding multifaceted and often contradictory sets of experiences and orientation and interpretative framework. My informants often recall their own experiences during the interviews to justify their standpoint or support their statements. When I set out to conduct the interviews, the aim was not to find a right or wrong answer but rather to understand how my informants understand their own experiences, interpret them and formulate opinions. In short, because of the nature of my research topic, it can only be best understood by the spoken word and interview is thus the best method.

There are various types of interviews. The one that I selected for my research is a semi-/partially structured interview. It is the type of interview Thagaard (2003) calls a research interview. She writes that this is the most common type of interview and elaborates that it is a type of interview where the topics, but not the order in which they are asked are decided in advance. Even though I had the interview guide ready in advance, I tried to ask follow-up questions to give the informants a chance to go into the depth of the matter, and I was flexible when it came to the order in which the questions were asked by adjusting to the flow of the interview. The reason for my choice was to get as much information on the topic as possible by making the conversation less restrictive and being open to additional new topics from my informants. It is important that the interviewer is open so that the informant can bring up topics that the interviewer had not thought about in advance (ibid. p.85).

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) write that an interview is an active knowledge-production process. They further illustrate that this means that the interviewer and interviewee produce knowledge together in a conversational relation. I found this to be true as my interviewees got the opportunity to reflect on topics they have not thought about before

through the interview questions, sometimes even surprising themselves with their own answers or contradicting themselves at times. Staunes & Søndergaard (2005) describe qualitative research interviews like dancing tango where there is active production of knowledge through dialogue. Tangaard & Brinkmann (2012) argue that interview must be seen as active interaction between two or more persons looking for socially negotiated, contextual responses. This is evident in the analyses as different definitions of the same term are produced by the same informants depending on the context.

3.3 The informants

All seven of my informants work for one municipality in Norway. They work as advisors for refugees who reside in that municipality and their family members who come through family reunion. They facilitate the introduction program which is provided for all newly arrived refugees who are settled in the municipality. In other words, my informants are integration workers and street-level bureaucrats who have direct contact with the immigrants they work with. Because of my connections with the municipality, I had the opportunity of getting to know the many integration workers who work there. I chose those specific seven informants because I assessed personally that they were competent enough to provide me with the information I needed. Their responsibilities range from facilitating the settlement of refugees in the municipality to implementing the Introduction Act which gives them a legal framework to conduct integration work. The informants I selected have extensive experience with integration work. They have in addition to their other responsibilities, given courses to participants of the introduction program about integration into the Norwegian society through various arenas.

The municipality is relatively large and receives a good number of refugees every year. My informants have experience working with people from many different countries, cultures, and backgrounds. Their age ranges from early thirties to mid-sixties, and their work experience regarding integration ranges from a couple of years to more than thirty years. I have chosen to call the informants Ola, Kari, Kristine, Siri, Marta, Bjørn and Noor.

All have higher education which is a requirement to work as an advisor in the municipality, but their level of education and their fields of study vary as people with different kinds of educational backgrounds can apply for the position of an advisor. However, all have a good amount of experience in integration work. This made it easier for me to explain the nature and the purpose of the interview. In addition, because they have higher education, it was easy for them to understand the purpose of the research project and to consent to being interviewed. I approached them individually to tell them about my thesis and to ask if they were willing to be interviewed. After getting positive responses from all, I then provided them with written information. It took about three months to complete all the interviews because they all have busy schedules, but they were positive, and the municipality also cooperated by providing us meeting rooms in working hours.

3.4 The interviews for the thesis

The data was collected within a span of three months in 2017. It is comprised of seven interviews conducted with seven integration workers working in the same municipality. I used a voice recorder during the interviews and took notes in addition. As Thagaard (2003) explains, the richest data material is based on a combination of voice recording

and notes as this gives the researcher an opportunity to use direct quotations and makes the note-taking less stressful as everything is being registered by the voice recorder. I also wanted to remember certain gestures and facial expressions that were significant to what was being discussed as communication is non-verbal as well as verbal. The interviews were then transcribed. After the first interview was complete, I started the process of transcribing right away. As Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) explain, to transcribe means to switch from one shape to another, to transform. The recorded interviews resulted in a large amount of written material. I chose to transcribe word for word to make sure that no data was lost in the process of converting the audio material to written material. During the process of transcribing the interviews, I translated them from Norwegian to English as six out of the seven interviews were conducted in Norwegian.

3.5 Consent and anonymity

For the informant to be able to give informed consent to participate, he/she must receive information about the purpose and main features of the research and information that being interviewed is voluntary (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.88). All the informants who participated in this research were informed in advance about the nature of the thesis and how the interviews would be conducted. They were also aware of what the data would be used for. After they agreed to be interviewed, they were sent a written letter of information and a consent form that they signed and submitted to me. The letter of information also detailed that they could withdraw their consent at any point in time without having to give a reason and that the data would then be deleted. In addition, it will not be possible to identify the persons involved in the research when the thesis is published as all personal information, and information that can indirectly help to identify the participants, will be anonymized. This is so that the data would not be traced back to them and to protect their privacy. Alver & Øyen (1997) elaborate that the protection of the integrity and private space of individuals means that they should not be identifiable in texts that are made available to the public. I have refrained from mentioning the name of the municipality where the interviews were conducted in order to protect the identities of my informants. I have also avoided giving details about exactly how many years of experience my informants have, their countries of origin, their exact ages or other types of information that might make them identifiable to the reader.

3.6 Language

As mentioned, all the interviews except one were conducted in Norwegian even though this thesis is written in English. The reason for this was that I wanted to make it easier for them to express themselves in a language, they are most comfortable with. On the other hand, it is more convenient for me to write the thesis in English than in Norwegian. That meant, that I had to translate the interviews into English while I transcribed them. The competence of translators is a key factor contributing to the validity of the translation product independent of when the language transformation occurred (Wong & Poon, 2010 as cited in Santos Jr, Black & Sandelowski, 2015). The process itself was not difficult as I am well versed in both languages. I have an educational background in English literature and have worked as an English language educator previously. In addition, I have also worked as a trained interpreter earlier and understand the principles of interpreting and translating from one language to another. So, I believe that I am qualified enough to translate the interviews from Norwegian into English. I took great care to translate the data correctly and in same manner that it was said. Thus, I believe

that no important data was lost or altered because the interviews were conducted in another language.

Filep (2009) goes further and argues that, not only language competence, but also historical, cultural, and societal knowledge about the context in focus can prevent “communication problems” or even conflictual (interview) situations and the loss of information when translating (and explaining!) specific terms and phrases. Only if we know these terms and concepts, can we use them in the right context and translate them accordingly. Because I worked in the same field as my informants, I was familiar with the terms and practices that they talked about and that has also assisted in ensuring that the data was translated correctly.

Filep (2009) mentions however, that there can be challenges when translating data from one language to another especially because of the cultural meaning and/or of the cultural or national concepts a specific language carries. He writes that one has to be well aware of how to use and translate a word or phrase to ensure that the meaning does not get “lost – not in, but by – translation”. While translating the interviews from Norwegian to English, I did encounter some words/phrases that do not have a direct translation. I have tried to solve that problem by paraphrasing without altering the meaning. As mentioned earlier, my language competence and knowledge about the field of integration have made that possible.

3.7 My position

Reflecting on my own role is necessary especially because I am associated with the environment that my interviewees work in as I am also an employee of the same municipality. I have thought long and hard about whether this would affect the process of data collection or the outcome of the research in any way. On the other hand, I can also be considered as an outsider because of my position as an immigrant (minority) and that can also have consequences for the study. Aune (2008) explains that it has become more common to emphasize one’s own role in the process of research. Making the research process transparent and our own role in the process, means that we can create a credible starting point for the reader. Although data analysis in qualitative research will always be influenced by the researcher who collects and interprets the material, this does not mean that this part of the research process is the result of chance and personal preferences. On the contrary, qualitative analyses are subject to strict quality requirements and the researcher attaches great importance to insight into the data material and the research process (ibid. p.2). It would perhaps not be possible to conclude that I have had zero influence on the outcome of the research, but I have taken great care to ensure that the results are credible. In the following sections, I will reflect on my role as a researcher and co-worker of the informants as well as member of the minority group. I will also highlight the steps I took to ensure that the research is as ethically sound as possible.

3.8 Positionality

Positionality affects the research process. It always does. The question is whether one can still do reliable and valid research which is also ethically sound. Positionality highlights how people, including researchers, come to know and interpret the world from different social locations; positionality shapes research, and may inhibit or enable certain research insights. A person's embodied subjectivity mediates the research process, including the relations with the people, places, and materials of the research project

(England, 2016, p.1). The reflexive turn in sociology and across much of the social sciences has brought a central focus on the "self" within research encounters. Within this context, qualitative researchers are required to highlight how their positionality shapes their research experience (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020, p.583). It can be said that I have the position of both an insider and an outsider. I am an insider meaning that I am part of the organization that my informants work in. We are co-workers and that creates a sense of 'us'. On the other hand, I am part of the minority group that my informants refer to as 'they' and that makes me an outsider. So, I will reflect on my insider/outsider position. But it is important to note that these categories are not static and are common in many research situations. Such as at home (insider) and away from home (outsider) binary is problematic in a number of ways not least because "we are all multiple insiders and outsiders" (Deutsch, 1981, p.174 as cited in Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020). However, I have chosen to reflect on these two positions as co-worker and member of the minority because of the influence they can possibly have on my work.

3.8.1 My position as an insider/co-worker

According to Alver og Øyen (1997), ethically speaking, it is not wrong to pick informants from one's own network. The researcher him/herself, must often with the help of his/her ingenuity, or own network, or the informants' network, find the persons he/she has use for and who can shed light on the actual issue. The fact that I knew the informants personally made it easier for me to find informants who were competent enough to answer my questions. In addition, the informants already knew and trusted me. They considered me as part of their group which made it easier for them to agree to do the interview. That also meant that they trusted me and felt comfortable enough to express their views during the interview. As Thagaard (2003) writes, a relationship between the researcher and the informants that is based on trust is vital as the material the researcher gets depends on it. The atmosphere during the interviews was friendly and not too formal. I made sure that we took short breaks in-between and chatted about other things. I believe that the interviewees did not question my trustworthiness or how I would handle the data. I believe that they felt safe enough to express their honest views. The knowledge that comes out of interview research is dependent on the social relation between the interviewer and the interviewee. This relation depends on the interviewer's ability to create a space where the person being interviewed can speak freely and safely (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.35). Another advantage that I had because of my connection to the organization my informants are a part of is that I have a good understanding of the topics and situations that my informants talk about. I understand the terms they use and the different work concepts, terminologies, and routines that they mention. Thagaard (2003) mentions that the researcher has a good basis for understanding the phenomenon when he/she is part of the same environment. I believe that my existing knowledge about my informants' line of work helped me to avoid misunderstandings that could have happened if the topic was completely foreign to me. At the same time, there can be something I took for granted that an outsider would have noticed.

As I mentioned earlier, I had the advantage of knowing the informants personally before the interview. The already established trust meant that they considered me as part of their group and not an outsider. In fact, I believe that people would have been more careful not to offend me had I gone to another municipality and interviewed workers who did not know me personally before the interview. Just as there exists a 'we' versus 'them' way of thinking in debates and discussions about immigrants, it was my

observation that there also exists a 'we' versus 'them' way of thinking in organization culture where employees talk about themselves in contrast to those who use their services. In this case, I was a part of the group they referred to as 'we' and as a result, they were able to share both their negative and positive experiences. This belongingness to their inner circle has resulted in a rich data where many examples can be drawn of how brutally honest the informants have been about their own experiences and opinions. At the same time, I took care not to pick employees who were very close friends of mine because I had to maintain some sort of distance from my informants. This was to avoid any undesirable outcome that might arise out of a close relationship with the informant or that might in any way influence the outcome of the research. Research suggests that one should take great care not to cross the line to what might be considered as unethical. The researcher must also, in the choice of informants, feel responsibility to consider where she or he can move out of the limits for what is considered ethically justifiable (Alver og Øyen, 1997, p.131). As Johannessen, Tuftte & Christoffersen (2010) explain, a researcher who is part of an organization or a profession may find himself/herself in a conflict of roles because he/she is both a researcher and friend to those who are observed and interviewed. My way of handling this issue was choosing informants who are good acquaintances but not close friends. In that way, I have attempted to get the information I needed and at the same time, maintain the distance I needed to look at the data from a researcher's point of view and be able to analyse it.

3.8.2 My position as an outsider/member of the minority

Berg, Flemmen & Gullikstad (2010) suggest that the term minority is used to refer to a peculiar group in relation to its surroundings or when seen through one's own eyes. As I am an immigrant from the Global South, and one who fits into the definition of 'minority' provided here, I found it necessary to reflect on my position. As the topic for this thesis is what integration means to integration workers, my informants talked about their experiences with, and opinions about, minority groups (immigrants). These experiences and opinions might not always be positive. For example, they might have experienced negative interactions with members of minority groups, or they might have had other challenges in their work with immigrants. This left me to wonder before the interview if they would feel comfortable talking openly about those issues with me who is also a member of the minority. Would they refrain from raising some topics or omit some opinions because they do not want to offend me? Would they speak about immigrants in a manner that was too politically correct? I had some concerns. Because of these concerns, I avoided giving them the interview guide in advance. This was to make sure that I did not get answers that they considered politically correct because of my position as an immigrant. Instead of pre-prepared, pre-planned responses, I wanted to get their honest and spontaneous answers. Of course, I cannot with full certainty guarantee that none of the answers were politically correct, but this was my way of taking caution.

However, as the data collection process went on, I did not find a reason to think that they were holding something back. They talked about both negative and positive encounters with immigrants and their personal reflections on those encounters.

3.9 Thematic analysis

As Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen (2018) write, in thematic analysis, we look for themes in our data. A theme is described as a grouping of data with important common features. I used that method to identify common themes in the material. Thematic

analysis is a qualitative method used for analyzing data. Braun & Clarke (2006) quote Boyatzis (1998) who writes that thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (ibid.). Braun and Clarke (2006) also argue that thematic analysis should be a foundational method for qualitative analysis, as it provides core skills for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. Buetow (2010) explains that thematic analysis tends to conflate two concepts: recurrence and importance. The goal of a thematic analysis is to group these small answers into more general categories - in themes - which together answer our research question (Johannssen, Rafoss & Rasmussen, 2018, p.279). The stage for stage process is: Preparation (where you provide and get an overview of data), Coding (where you highlight and put into words important points in data), Categorization (where you categorize the codes of your data into more general topics), Reporting (where you report the topics and their content) (ibid.).

The four stages mentioned above were instrumental in analyzing the data for this thesis. After the process of transcription was complete, I went through the material carefully. It was possible to identify common themes (patterns) in the responses from my informants. In their personal definitions of integration, even though the statements were quite different, it was possible to identify that they mostly leaned to what is called social integration. In their descriptions of how they conduct integration work, it was possible to identify a common theme which is the importance of employment/economic independence. In conversations about gender/gender equality, it was evident that the common theme was the expression that immigrants need to implement the Norwegian form of gender equality to be integrated. There were three recurring themes. That means that there was not only one single theme in the material that could answer the overarching question. The themes were different based on the topic of discussion. So, after the preparation, coding, and categorization stages, it was possible to report the contents of these themes.

4 The term integration

In this chapter, I will explore how integration workers understand and define the term integration. This is important because of the role integration workers have as street-level bureaucrats. They implement policies, but at the same time, have discretion and autonomy. Sætermo (2021) quotes Rugkåsa (2010) who explains that the exercise of discretion gives ground to bureaucrats to have influence on the distribution of the welfare state's services and thus a great influence on people's lives. She argues that it is therefore relevant to explore what understandings of integration, integration work and "those to be integrated" are found among refugee workers. As mentioned in the first chapter, the term integration is ambiguous and has been used to mean different things depending on which aspect of integration is being discussed. What we put into the term integration is about whether we have the spotlight on societal structures or individuals, on the process or on the goal (Sætermo, Gullikstad & Kristensen, 2021, p.15). At the end of this chapter, I will discuss the different understandings of integration that exist among integration workers based on my findings.

4.1 Integration as a mutual process

I will start with the most common definition of integration we find in literature. It is common to describe integration as a two-way process, where both immigrants and host communities must adapt, or as a three-way process, between immigrants, host countries and sending countries (Garcés-Masareñas & Penninx, 2016). Some of my informants, stressed this type of mutuality when expressing what integration is. These expressions align with definitions that give importance to mutuality. That means that the immigrant as well as the host society both play a part for the process to succeed.

My informant Noor agreed with the idea of mutuality. Noor is a woman in her thirties who has a bachelor's degree. She has a long experience in healthcare and has worked with integration for a couple of years. She joined the field of integration because of her own passion and motivation to contribute to the work's success. She now works as an advisor. She defines integration in the following manner:

Integration... I see integration as having two sides. Most people, when they think of integration, they think... Ok, this person is the one who came into the society and this person is the one who must integrate but at the same time, I see that the society also has a responsibility to integrate with the person. So, integration has two sides. It goes both ways. It is not only the person who has to integrate but it is also the Norwegian society that needs to be open.

Noor explains that even though most people think that integration is the immigrant's responsibility, she believes that it is a mutual process. According to her, the reason why the responsibility is often placed on the immigrant is because it is he/she that has come into a new society and not the other way around. Nevertheless, she mentions that integration cannot be a success if the host society is not open. So, she places some responsibility on the Norwegian society as well.

I asked another informant Kari what the first thing that comes to her mind is when she hears the word integration. Kari is a middle-aged woman with a bachelor's degree. She has worked with immigrants and refugees since the late 90s and directly with integration for almost two decades. She works as an advisor for participants of the introduction program. She says the following about integration:

First thing... For me, integration is a mutual process. One is the person who comes into the new, big society and the other is the big society that receives the new person. For me, it is a two-sided process. They meet in the middle and both parts have equal responsibility. It is not always the reality that they take that responsibility though, it varies.

Kari's response to the question not only stresses on mutuality but it also gives both parties equal responsibility. We get the image of the immigrant and the host society taking equal responsibility and working in harmony to achieve an outcome. She uses the words 'two-sided' and 'mutual' interchangeably which leads me to conclude that she gives the same meaning to those words. She describes the host society as the 'big society' and assigns it the role of receiving the person who comes into it. Without such a role from the host society and the efforts of the newcomer, integration to her cannot succeed. Her definition is based on how things should be ideally, but she admits that the reality does not always match that definition.

4.2 Integration as participation and acquisition of knowledge

Other definitions of integration depict it as participation and acquisition of knowledge and place more responsibility on the newcomer than on the host society. Some of my informants expressed this view that suggests that integration is something the immigrant achieves through participation and acquisition of knowledge about the host society. These agree with definitions by scholars that put an emphasis on participation. Overall, in sociological analysis, integration refers to the process by which individuals become members of society and their multilevel and multiform participation within it; integration is a process relating to different forms of participation: in the neighborhood, at work, school, family, etc. (Anthias, Kontos & Morokvasic-Müller, 2013, p.3). One of my informants Ola gives this type of definition. Ola is a man in his sixties who also has a bachelor's degree. He has a long work experience within various fields but has worked with integration for about five years. He now works as an advisor. He says:

The first thing that I think about is that it is about someone who should learn and get knowledge about how it is to live in Norway. One can think of many things regarding integration but that is the first thing I think about.

The above quotation indicates that the acquisition of knowledge is important for integration. The expectation is that the immigrant must learn what it is like to live in Norway in order to be integrated. Even though integration has various aspects, this is the first thing that comes to mind when Ola thinks of integration.

Another informant, Kristine points out that participation is important for integration. Kristine is a woman in her forties who has a master's degree. She has worked with integration for a couple of years, but she has also been involved with voluntary work with immigrants for many years. She now works as an advisor. She says:

I think that they are going to live here. So, they should manage things and figure out how things work. That is what I think. They should be independent and participate in the society.

Kristine both thinks of acquisition of knowledge and participation when she hears the term integration. She also gives the reasoning that it is immigrants who are going to live here. This implies that it is immigrants who have the need for that knowledge. So, it is their responsibility to figure things out and learn about the host society. The word "independent" can both mean economic independence and independence in doing things without assistance from the host society because of the knowledge that immigrants have acquired. Participation is also important to her and something that she associates with integration.

Another informant, Marta gives a similar opinion. Marta is a woman in her late thirties with a bachelor's degree. She has worked in the field of integration for almost a decade. She says:

I think of participation... that you participate in different arenas in the society. In work, in leisure, in education... I think of participation. I think that they are going to live here and so should manage things and figure out how things work, they should manage by themselves and participate in the society. They should understand the society both in terms of work and socially and they have an understanding that makes them participate.

Marta thinks of participation when she hears the word integration, both regarding employment and socially. She expects immigrants to understand the society. She also explains that newcomers' understanding of the society should result in their participation. She expresses the belief that immigrants should participate in different arenas. That places the responsibility solely on them. They are responsible for participating in the labor market, in leisure and in education. She also gives the same reasoning that immigrants are going to live here. So, they should figure things out.

4.3 Integration as adaptation to new culture and preservation of one's own culture

It is said that integration is an approach that has substituted the previous strategy of assimilation in many European countries. It is meant to be a process that allows immigrants to cultivate their own culture and language as well as adapt to their host country. Castles, Miller & De Haas (2014) mention that governments have replaced assimilation with integration recognizing that adaptation was a gradual process that required mutual accommodation to some degree. Okin (1999) quotes Kymlicka who argues that that membership in a "rich and secure cultural structure", with its own language and history is essential both for the development of self-respect and for giving persons a context in which they can develop the capacity to make choices about how to lead their lives. Though it is claimed that this type of approach is what many European countries follow, it has been argued by Gullestad (2002) and other researchers in the field that it is not actually what happens as assimilation is still exercised disguised as integration.

Nevertheless, one of my informants, Bjørn believes in the ideal concept of what integration should be and expressed the idea that cultural preservation and adapting to new values is an important aspect of integration. Bjørn is a man in his late fifties with a bachelor's degree. He has more than thirty years of experience in the field of integration. He works now as an advisor. He says the following about integration:

I think about things that should fit together... that the person should adapt to the Norwegian society and follow Norwegian rules but at the same time, keep and preserve some of his/her things. Sometimes, I notice that some people speak about integration but what they mean is assimilation. It is assimilation when you take away a person's values, when a person gives up his own. For example, eating habits or a specific way of dressing. I think it is important to preserve these for the person who must be integrated. There is no paradox between keeping your own identity and being integrated in Norway. When I see my colleagues who wear hijab, I absolutely have no problem with seeing them as integrated in the Norwegian society, but I know that others, I don't mean my colleagues but others in the society can have a problem with it. They think that people who wear specific clothing items are not properly integrated.

Bjørn explains that one should preserve his/her culture while adapting to the Norwegian society and mentions that assimilation can sometimes get mistaken for integration as the immigrant is expected to give up his/her culture. He says that if one gives up all his/her values, that cannot be described as integration. He admits that while some in the society might have an issue with other cultures or some items of clothing, to him, one does not need to abandon those things in order to be integrated into the Norwegian society. To him, clothing items like the hijab, do not hinder integration. They are not indications of who is integrated and who is not. By saying that "there is no paradox between keeping your own identity and being integrated in Norway", Bjørn is implying that integration is a combination of these two factors, adaptation and preservation.

4.4 Integration as multifaceted term

While the rest of my informants put more focus on one aspect of integration, one informant, Siri mentions several aspects like participation, financial contribution through taxes and having network. Siri is a woman in her early thirties. She has a master's degree and has worked in the field of integration for about eight years. She says:

I think that one should be active in the neighborhood and such things but also that one contributes by paying taxes either by being in the program or through employment or by studying and taking student loans. One needs to be out of the house and do something in one way or another... It is primarily what I think about integration and maybe also that one has network.

Siri mentions that financial contribution through paying taxes is one aspect of integration. That is one of the main goals of the introduction program that my informant works to facilitate. It is also an important part of the integration politics. Research also suggests that economic incorporation is important for integration. An important aspect of immigrant integration is their position in the labor market. The first step towards economic incorporation is the participation in the labor market as opposed to being

inactive. A major second transition is that immigrants find a job instead of being unemployed (Van Tubergen, 2006, p.73).

In addition, she mentions other aspects of integration like participating socially in the neighborhood and such arenas. Here also, we get the image of an immigrant who actively pursues the goal of integration through participation, pursuing either education or employment as opposed to being passive. Her answer is focused on different aspects of integration. That means that to her, integration is a multifaceted term and achieving it requires more than just one thing.

4.5 The differences between the definitions

4.5.1 Social integration vs system integration

Mikkelsen (2008) makes a distinction between social integration and system integration based on an analysis by a Danish researcher named Charlotte Hamburger who first wrote about this in 1997. According to that distinction, social integration focuses on the majority's and minority's perception of, attitudes towards, and behavior towards each other at both the individual and collective level. He writes that in slightly different words, it means the attitudes and social forms with which we encounter each other in everyday life - in day-care centers, at school, in the workplaces, in leisure, on the streets and alleys, but also in our use of language while system integration refers to the policy of the state and the supporting institutions towards ethnic minorities both when it comes to the granting of civil, social and political rights, and when it comes to matters affecting the economic and social position of minorities in society. System integration must therefore be understood first and foremost as political integration and refers to the degree of the system's acceptance of immigrants as equal citizens with the right to political influence. Some of the definitions from integration workers were focused on social integration while others put more focus on system integration. That is part of what makes the term, integration ambiguous. It is used without specifying whether we are talking about the social aspect of integration or integration at a system level.

The definitions that stressed mutuality focus on adaptation on both parts meaning that the immigrant adapts to the culture, norms, and values of the host society while the host society also tries to get to know the immigrant. This implies that my informants were referring to social integration and not so much to integration work that is conducted at a system level. Noor's opinion that it is not only the person who has to integrate but it is also the Norwegian society that needs to be open is a clear reference to the interaction between immigrants and the Norwegian society and how that mutual effort and interaction can result in integration.

Kari who agrees that integration is a mutual process states that the person who comes into the new, big society, and the big society that receives the new person have an equal responsibility meaning that she is also referring to the interaction between immigrants and the host society. So, from these definitions, some of my informants automatically think of social integration and the processes that facilitate social integration when they hear the term.

Likewise, the definitions that focus on participation and the acquisition of knowledge, although one-sided are also references to social integration. The informants who

expressed this view have an expectation that the immigrant should acquire knowledge about the society and participate in different arenas. This is at an individual level, but it fits Mikkelsen's (2008) definition of social integration. Ola's opinion that the person should acquire knowledge about how it is to live in Norway is an expectation that social integration should happen on an individual level. It is more focused on the efforts of the individual and not on the integration work that is conducted at a system level. Marta's and Kristine's expressions about how immigrants need to participate in different arenas are also remarks about social integration. The task of integration is given to individuals rather than the state or institutions.

Bjørn's expression that there is no paradox between keeping your own identity and being integrated in Norway is also another reference to social integration. According to him, immigrants should adapt to Norwegian culture as well as preserve their own heritage and that is something that happens on an individual level.

The only explanation that incorporates both social and system integration is that of Siri because her opinion indicates that the term has a multifaceted nature. She mentions the social aspects like being active in the neighbourhood and having network but also that one contributes by paying taxes either by being in the program or through employment or by studying and taking student loans. The latter aspects do align with system integration. The introduction program is facilitated by institutions that work with integration. The program is driven by the state's aim to integrate newcomers by focusing on employment/education.

It is possible to say that most of my informants thought of social integration when being asked to define the term even though their role as employees of the municipality is to facilitate integration at a system level.

4.5.2 Process or goal

Integration is sometimes defined as a process and other times as a goal. Based on the opinions of my informants, integration appears to be a desired goal, something that one achieves by taking certain measures. Whether it is through participation, acquiring knowledge, adapting to society, being employed, or studying, one achieves the goal of being integrated. It is unclear how much of those things one must do before one earns the title of integrated. Nevertheless, all these measures seem to be a means to a goal.

4.5.3 Who is responsible for integration?

Some definitions of integration place responsibility on both the immigrant and the host society while other definitions imply that integration is something the immigrant does. Definitions that are based on mutuality like those of Noor and Kari place the responsibility both on the immigrant and the host society and claim that both parties must participate for integration to be successful, while the definitions that stress on participation and acquisition place more responsibility on the immigrant. Since the immigrant is the one who has come into the society, he/she is expected to learn and acquire knowledge about the society and participate in different arenas. In other words, integration becomes the task of the immigrant.

Kristine says that is the advice she gives to the participants of the introduction program:

I encourage them to go to language cafes, do voluntary work, go out, participate in activities that give them worth. In addition to internships and so forth because that is a must. Do not sit at home and watch TV!

As we see in Kristine's advice above, integration is something immigrants achieve by actively participating in different arenas. The alternative according to my informant, is sitting at home and watching TV which paints a picture of passivity. Bjørn's ideal description of integration as culture preservation and adaptation is also focused on what the immigrant should and should not do in order to be integrated. Similarly, the definition of integration as multifaceted is also focused on the immigrant's responsibility such as paying taxes and participating in different arenas. Except for the two informants who stressed mutuality, the rest of my informants imply that integration is the duty of the immigrant.

4.6 Summary

The way that my informants describe integration confirms the ambiguity of the term. They define the term in different ways and put emphasis on different aspects of integration.

Moreover, the same term is used when referring to social integration and system integration even though most of my informants think of the social aspects when they hear the term and have more focus on the integration that happens at an individual and collective level. There was very little mention of the integration that is facilitated at a system level. Most also imply that integration is something immigrants are responsible for and a desired goal that immigrants should strive to achieve.

Interestingly, my informants do not reflect on their own work when they spontaneously define integration. This leads me to the topic for the next chapter. Which understandings of integration are produced by the way integration workers conduct their work and will their initial definitions persist?

5 Integration in practice

As we read in chapter 4, the term integration is defined in many ways by my integration workers. There is not a common definition that all agree on, but most definitions were focused on social integration. In this chapter, I will draw on the interviews to further explore how integration is understood by integration workers. I will do so by exploring how they conduct their work with the participants of the introduction program and by exploring which understandings of integration are reflected in those descriptions. Do their initial descriptions of the term align with how they conduct integration work and the politics that drives it?

5.1 Integration through work and economic independence

5.1.1 Employment as a measurable outcome

In the municipality where I conducted the interviews, integration is assessed on one ground and that is how many of the participants get employed or start an education financed by student loans during/at the end of the program. Employment/economic independence is referred to as 'goal achievement' and registered as such. This is because employment is measurable. The municipality where I conducted the interviews is not alone in using such an approach. Research suggests that this is a common approach. Most surveys of the municipalities' integration efforts have made use of quantitative methods and the preferred source material has been surveys and register data (Mikkelsen, 2008).

This need to produce and show results for the work that is conducted inevitably has a strong impact on the performance of integration workers and what they encourage the participants of the program to do. That is the reason why I have chosen to write about this first in this chapter. I wanted to find out which understanding of integration this produces for the people who work within the field.

When asked what qualifications/characteristics she associates with a person who is integrated, Kristine answers:

Here, it is employment that is emphasized. That is a good measurable case. Do they have a job, or do not they have a job? How much do they work? That is important... Employment is measurable. There is an emphasis on employment, but the social aspect is also necessary.

As the above quotation shows, my informant explains that employment is where the emphasis is at her workplace regarding integration, but the reason she provides, is worth noting. Employment is measurable meaning that it is possible to come up with statistics about how many are employed within a specific time frame while other areas such as social aspects are difficult to measure. It is easy to quantify how many have achieved the goal or register how many hours/days they work. That quantifiable aspect of having a job makes it possible to categorize who has succeeded at integration and who has not. She mentions the social aspect of integration in a way that makes it secondary to employment. In addition, she starts her statement by saying "Here, it is employment

that is emphasized". That means that another understanding of integration is produced by how integration work is conducted. Her description of integration here deviates from her initial statement in the previous chapter where she puts equal emphasis on participating socially and in the workforce.

Bjørn explains this when he says:

Our success is measured by how many people get jobs, but we do not know whether they have a social life or if they are part of organizations. I see the advantage of focusing on the goal which is employment. That is okay, but sometimes, other things which our work also consists of, can disappear. Talking to people about everyday things, struggles, and challenges is very important for them to be successfully qualified at the end.

It seems like my informant's ideal definition of integration conflicts with what his job requires him to focus on and that creates contradictions in his statements. As I mentioned earlier, the municipality refers to employment/economic independence as 'goal achievement'. But who is it that achieves the goal? The participants of the program or the integration workers? Bjørn explains that their success/the success of the municipality is measured by how many people get jobs. The employees and the municipality must produce a result that shows that their work is a success. Because of this drive to measure the outcome of integration work, getting immigrants employed becomes a task that integration workers emphasize because they are also evaluated on that ground. Bjørn admits that he does not know whether other aspects are in place. He does not know whether those who have jobs have a social life or whether they are part of organizations. To him, a person who is successfully qualified at the end of the program is a person who is equipped with more things than just work. He stresses the other aspects of integration even though he agrees on the importance of work.

At the beginning of the interview, when I asked him if there is anything about his work that he thinks is challenging, he explains that the system is goal-driven and it can be a disadvantage when it comes to integration as the goal can be achieved at the cost of other things that help a person to function properly in the Norwegian society. There is a conflict between his understanding of what integration is and how he is required to do his work even though the latter is a must.

Lispky (1980) argues that those who enter public employment, particularly street-level bureaucracies, do so with at least some commitment to service. Yet the very nature of their work prevents them from coming even close to the ideal conception of their jobs. He writes that one aspect people experience in street-level bureaucracies is in the conflicts that they encounter in wanting their organizational life to be more consistent with their own preferences and commitments. This is apparent in Bjørn's statement. He has a desire to help those he meets in other areas of their lives, but that is not prioritized by the municipality. This creates a sense of dissatisfaction and an internal conflict for him. While for others, their personal understanding of the term and the way the understanding produced by their profession remain different without creating a conflict or possibly without them reflecting over it.

Kari says:

The office works with integration, but we get measured by the number of people who find work or start an education. So, the main focus lies there, and the goal of the Introduction Act is for people to be able to participate in the Norwegian

society and to be independent economically. So, that is the office's focus. People need to be economically independent and, in a position, to be able to manage in the society.

As Kari says, the office does work with integration. My informants mention that other social life or family-oriented courses and activities are provided to the participants of the introduction program, but success is solely measured by how many people get employed by the end of the program. Therefore, employment, as Kari says, becomes the focus. Kari mentions that economic independence is the goal of the Introduction Act. That is correct but the law also has other goals that are not stressed on equally or in other words, if a person succeeds in other areas of integration such as learning the language and being part of the society, it would still not be considered as 'goal achievement' if the person is not employed or is economically independent by the end of the program. Some of my informants have argued that participation in the work force leads to social integration but that might not always be the case. Some types of jobs do not allow much communication with others or do not create grounds to form friendships. Halaand & Wallevik (2017) argue that working life does not always function as an arena for integration as intended. Paradoxically, paid work can sometimes also have an exclusionary effect, in the sense that interaction between the employee and the Norwegian society is reduced through the employee's job activity, of course depending on the character of the work. Contemporary discourses about integration consider labor market incorporation as a key element in facilitating broader processes of tackling social exclusion, on the one hand, and developing a sense of belonging to society on the other (Anthias, Cederberg, Barber & Ayres, 2013). There is no doubt that incorporation into the labor market is an important factor for social integration more generally. But being economically active, whilst being a prerequisite, is not on its own sufficient for enabling social integration, and the forms of that labor market incorporation are crucial (ibid). So, even if a person manages to find a job within a short period of time and is considered to be successfully integrated and registered as such by the municipality, the person could still be marginalized in many other ways.

5.1.2 The welfare state requires participation in the workforce

My informants also talked about the connection between the welfare state and the insistence on work/employment. Their pursuit to get immigrants to integrate into the workforce as fast as possible is also partly driven by a concern for the well-being and continuity of the welfare state. This is a common rhetoric that we find in political documents. Employment for all is a political goal in Norway. The work line's (Arbeidslinjas) ideology is evident in many parts of Norwegian welfare politics. It is most evident in the labor market policy and the goal about employment for all (Rugkåsa, 2012). Norway is a welfare state and a high level of participation in the labor market is vital for the sustainability of the system. If the burdens on welfare budgets become too great, the welfare state itself can be threatened. Immigration to a country with equal treatment principles and a comprehensive welfare state can be challenging for the populations' generosity in the first round and can also in the long run affect the sustainability of the system itself, if the majority of those who come cannot feed themselves (Hagelund & Brochmann, 2007, p.267).

Kari says:

For Norway, it is without a doubt work that is most important, that people can take care of themselves economically and contribute to the welfare state's

continuity. That is very important... People need to be economically independent and, in a position, to be able to manage economically in the society.

As illustrated in the quotation above, employment is not only desired for the sake of the individual and the success of the municipality but also for the benefit of the society/state. Kari specifies that employment is vital for the country as it ensures the continuity of the welfare state. This concern for the continuity of the welfare state is also a driving force behind the emphasis on employment in integration work. As she mentions, it is important for the country that immigrants contribute financially to the state and not be dependent on it. There seems to be an underlying implication in her statement that for the individual, there might be other things that are important in addition to work but for Norway, it is without a doubt work that is most important. So, the well-being of the country must be prioritized.

Marta expresses a similar idea:

From a societal perspective, it is very important that people work. It has to do with sustainability for the whole society and there can be negative consequences if people do not work... The expectations must be clear so that we can take care of the safe and good welfare society that we have and so that we won't ruin it.

Marta explains that the continuity of the welfare state depends on peoples' employment and this needs to be clearly expressed to newcomers. This is because if immigrants cannot be economically independent, the responsibility falls on the state. Participation in the labor market and contribution in form of taxes are vital for sustainability of the welfare state. She fears the negative consequences that can arise if immigrants do not work. This concern has been expressed by several researchers who have written about the issue. The generous welfare state, which redistributes income to all legal residents, necessitates selection and delimitation of potential new members from other countries. And it has been important to integrate new arrivals, particularly into working life but also into greater society. If the fundamental social structure is to be maintained, new inhabitants must be made part of it (Kivisto & Wahlbeck, 2013, p.222). Since the retirements are financed by current payments and services are free or greatly subsidized, the welfare state must be financed by taxes and fees (Hatland, Kuhnle & Romøren, 2001, p.201). This sentiment was conveyed by my informants and the words 'contribution' and 'participation' were repeatedly mentioned throughout the interviews. This is an echoing of the national policy that is the driving force behind the work that my informants do. In the Norwegian welfare state, there is a strong link between integration as a political concept and work. Integration into working life is a means of fulfilling welfare policy goals, and work participation symbolizes integration in the broadest sense (ibid., p.58). The main goal of integration policy is for immigrants and their children to be able to use their resources and contribute to the community. The keys to integration into Norwegian society lie in participating in working life and having good Norwegian skills (IMDi, 2022). In the above statement from the Directorate for Integration and Diversity, there is a clear emphasis on contribution and the keys to integration are said to be working and having good language skills. Possibly in that order.

The concerns of integration workers for the welfare state, may stem from political policies and rhetoric as they have the position of street-level bureaucrats with the responsibility of implementing political guidelines. This, in combination with their own

personal opinions results in an understanding of integration that is geared towards employment and economic independence.

5.2 Who is integrated?

We have discussed how the desire to show results for integration work and to ensure the continuity of the welfare state, leads to an emphasis on employment. I will further explore my informants' understanding of the term integration by how they describe an integrated person, and how they describe a person who failed to integrate into the Norwegian society. The question of who is integrated will help us unveil the understanding of integration that lies behind.

I asked Kristine to give me an example of a person who is integrated and she says:

I have one... He does not have a job yet, but it will come... things will get in place for him. He has higher education.

The person she mentions is educated. Therefore, she is confident that he will find a job. Her confidence in the possibility that he will find work seems to be why she believes he is integrated. Kristine does not give other reasons why she thinks the person is integrated. As for an example of a person who is not integrated into the Norwegian society, she says the following:

I have some who do not have a job, who have ended the program without a job. Ummm... there were different reasons but there was one who ended the program without a job and was a senior participant, 56 years old, speaks poor Norwegian and speaks English. He participates in other ways. He holds Arabic classes. So, he is NOT integrated. He is far from working life, very far away, thinks very highly of himself. He wants to be a teacher, but he cannot be that if he does not speak Norwegian. I do not know if I can say he is not integrated because he contributes in his own way and he has some network.

Kristine's opening statement makes it clear what the prerequisite for integration is in her eyes. She equates ending the introduction program without a job with failure to integrate. Then, she started giving an example of a person who did not manage to be integrated into the Norwegian society because he does not have a job, but it seems like midway in her own explanation, she seemed to have doubted if he was indeed not integrated. He holds Arabic classes, but he does not earn an income from it. He does it for free and therefore benefits others. He is not idle, and he has a network of people, but he is not employed and therefore, he is the person Kristine thinks of when asked to give an example of a person who failed to integrate into the society. This shows how my informant puts the emphasis on employment and economic independence rather than on social aspects or voluntary work. The person that she talks about seems to be integrated in other arenas, but the lack of employment becomes an issue when integration is the topic.

Kristine mentions later in the interview that she encourages the participants of the program to go to language cafes, to do voluntary work, to go out and participate in activities that give them a sense of worth. She also expresses her belief that they should do internships in addition because that is a must. All these activities are meant to facilitate integration, but her example of the person who she believes is not integrated is one who has implemented her advice but has failed to get employed by the end of the

program. My informant's conflicting opinions do not end here. She mentions that a person who has a job, but lacks a social life is not necessarily integrated even though a big part of integration is employment, but then she recounts the story of a previous participant of the program and says the following:

There was this young person. She has a part time job, is going to start high school and lives at home with her parents. She wears hijab. I would call that person integrated. She is kind, she does not do anything wrong, does not drink. She lives with her parents, but she will meet Norwegians when she goes to high school. I would call her integrated. She has a part time job. She has a future. I do not think she participates in free time activities. She reads, studies, and works. She has ambitions.

The person described in the above example does not participate in social activities, but her job and her ambitions seem to have convinced Kristine that she is indeed integrated in her new host country. Kristine mentions the fact that the girl wears hijab and lives with her parents and does not drink to imply that those things do not play a role in who she thinks is integrated. What is important is that the person in her example works hard and has ambitions. Kristine says that she associates many characteristics/qualities with integration, but that opinion is not reflected in her examples. On the contrary, her examples illustrate that one needs to be employed or have good prospects to find a job in order to be integrated.

Ola answers the same question by saying:

I think it is a person who has control over his/her economy and lives well whether it is through student loan, work, or part time work.

For Ola, economic independence is a requirement for integration and that can be achieved through different means. What is important is that the person is self-reliant economically. In his initial list of requirements, Ola mentions other things such as being active, volunteering and speaking Norwegian but interestingly, when I ask him to give me a concrete example of a person who managed to integrate into the society, he recounts the stories of two participants in the program who succeeded by getting employed before their time in the introduction program was over. The success factor is employment and economic independence in this example as well.

He says:

There was one here from Afghanistan.... When the end of the program was near, he really wanted to find a job, whatever it was. So, he went to the employment agencies, and they told him what kind of experience he needed to be employed. So, he got an internship to get that experience and he was later employed by the agencies for half a month before he found a job which was a one-year contract as a project manager... There was also one who was very active even when he lived at the refugee reception center. He was in the program maybe for six months before he found a part time job.

The person from Afghanistan is considered integrated into the Norwegian society because he got a one-year contract. We do not know if he will still be working after one year and how his success story will eventually turn out. There is also no mention of his language

skills or how socially integrated he is. He is however portrayed as an active job seeker, doing all he can to find work.

The second person is also integrated in Ola's opinion because he found a part time job after six months in the program. The fact that Ola mentions the duration of time the person has been in the program implies that he finds it impressive that the person managed to find a job so quickly. We do not know if the part-time job can give the person a stable connection to Norwegian working life.

The above examples depict stories of immigrants who were active job seekers and who managed to be employed quickly as a result of their own efforts but there is no mention of how well integrated, they are in other areas of their lives. As illustrated in the previous chapter, integration, regardless of what it means to integration workers, is described as something immigrants should actively pursue. It is described as something that is the responsibility of immigrants. That is reflected in the above examples of success stories.

Another informant Bjørn explains that mastering the Norwegian language is important for integration as well as understanding how the society works in relation to culture, habits, tradition and so on. He emphasizes however, that a person should be able to keep his/her identity and values if it does not oppose what is legal according to the law in Norway.

The above explanation from Bjørn seems to match the textbook definition of integration provided in chapter 2 in contrast to assimilation. He does not mention employment as a requirement. At first glance, he seems to stand out from the rest of my informants who mention the importance of employment right away. He also mentions that he encourages people to go on internships not only because they can get a job but so that they can understand the society better. However, when I asked him to give me a concrete example of a person who managed to be integrated into the Norwegian society, he says the following:

I remember a person I had a couple of years ago. He was very sick when he first came. We thought that he would need a sick leave from the program, but he learned the language very fast, got an internship at a home for the elderly and got a job there after a while.

As illustrated, even if Bjørn initially gave other requirements for integration, the integrated person who comes to mind is the one who managed to get employed despite his illness. Bjørn mentions that he remembers the person from a couple of years ago, and the person seems to have left an impression on him. He was so sick that Bjørn and his colleagues did not think he would be able to fully participate in the program, but the person is portrayed as a picture of resilience who managed to get to the goal of employment despite his challenges. As in some of the other examples, there is no explanation about how integrated he is in other areas. The fact that he has a job is enough to earn him the title 'integrated.'

On the contrary, when I asked him to give me a concrete example of a person who failed to be integrated into the society, he says the following:

Yes, I remember a middle-aged man. He had education but did not have the documents. He wanted to be a writer. He was not willing to do the low kind of

jobs and was not interested in internships. He did not know what to do to be economically independent and he was relatively good at the language, but he didn't manage to be successful. There are some who come with education who can't seem to start all over again and work their way up. Maybe it is because in some countries, some jobs have a very low status. I understand that people want to work within their professions and keep their status, but it is challenging.

The story above that Bjørn recounts is one of an educated man who learned the language but struggled to find work within his profession. It is interesting that Bjørn himself refers to some jobs as "low kind of jobs" while claiming that the person he is talking about also has the same attitude towards certain jobs. Bjørn has mentioned before that mastering the Norwegian language is important for integration but in his example, mastering the language has not led him to believe that the person is integrated. By saying that "he was relatively good at the language, but he didn't manage to be successful", Bjørn is equating success to employment and in turn, to integration. He also implies that those with education can be a problematic group as they are not willing to take whatever job they find. The actions of those individuals are attributed to the practices in their countries and not as something they choose to do as individuals. Individuals are perceived as representatives of the countries they come from which leads to generalizing and stereotyping.

Again, nothing is mentioned about his social life or other activities he might be involved in, but he is regarded as a failure by Bjørn because he was unemployed at the end of the introduction program. My informant's initial requirements for integration are not reflected in the examples he gives.

My informant Bjørn is not alone in this paradox. Marta, when asked what requirements a person needs to fulfil in order to be integrated, says:

You need to be part of the community to be integrated. It could be through employment, education, organized or voluntary work or hobby... but if you are part of the community outside of your family or ethnic group, you are integrated.

The description above is not focused on only one thing. It depicts an image of integration happening through multiple arenas. It requires the person to be part of the community he/she lives in. One would expect these ideals to be reflected when I asked my informant to give me concrete examples of people who managed to be integrated into the Norwegian society, but she gives several examples of people who got employed. She mentions 1. A person who got a job at a fast-food restaurant after an internship. 2. A person who got a job at a shoe repair shop at the shopping mall after an internship. 3. Others who combine multiple incomes from multiple jobs to be economically self-reliant. 4. A person who works at two restaurants.

There is no doubt what the prerequisite for integration is. One needs to be self-reliant through paid work. Marta has several examples of people who she believes are integrated. Again, the question of, what integration is, and who is integrated, seem to produce two different results. The multifaceted nature of integration described in the beginning is replaced by an emphasis on employment.

5.3 The shift from social integration to focus on employment

We have seen that in practice, integration work is driven by the desire to get immigrants to participate in the work force as soon as possible. In the white paper from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security titled 'From reception center to the workforce', we find the following statement:

The Norwegian welfare model is dependent on high participation in the workforce. It is essential for society that newly arrived immigrants with refugee backgrounds are enabled to enter the labor market as soon as possible. It is essential that immigrants do not remain outside the labor market and become dependent on cash benefits (Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016)).

The desire is integration into the workforce as quickly as possible. This is reflected in how integration workers conduct their work, but this goal poses its own challenges. The first challenge is that the other statutory objectives of the introduction program that integration workers are also supposed to implement are not valued as much. The introduction program aims to:

- a. Give basic skills in Norwegian,
- b. Give basic insight into Norwegian society,
- c. Prepare one for participation in professional/working life. (Lovdata, my translation)

The law also instructs that the program should contain work or education-oriented measures. It is the work of my informants as street-level bureaucrats to ensure that this law is implemented. However, it is important to note that the first two goals of the introduction program are not considered as important as the third one and achieving the first two goals is not necessarily considered integration if it does not result in employment in the end. Although other important factors such as learning Norwegian, being active in the society, volunteering, education, and internships are also mentioned in the interviews, the common factor that all agree on is the importance of employment, making it the most sought-after result in the quest to integrate immigrants into the Norwegian society. The other factors are a means to an end, the end being employment. There is also no real attempt to find out how many of the participants achieve the other goals stated in the Introduction Act by the end of the program. When the goal of employment is not achieved for different reasons, the immigrant and to some extent the integration work of the municipality is considered as a failure. Because of that, even if the employment is on temporary basis or might not give the person a secure future, the person is still encouraged to choose that rather than staying in the program. This just aggravates an already existing problem as part-time jobs, as research suggests are accompanied by many insecurities. The socio-economic insecurities that accompany part-time and short-term jobs are evident in many accounts, and they are seen to render the broader integration project problematic (Anthias, Cederberg, Barber & Ayres, 2013, p.43).

In addition, immigrants who have completed higher education in their home countries or have a skill are encouraged to take whatever job they can find which leads to deskilling. This not only deprives the society of useful existing knowledge and skill that can be used for its betterment but also has a negative impact on the individual. Though evident, it should be stressed that for a skilled person with a university degree to be classified as a

manual and unskilled laborer not only limits their potential but may also be experienced as demeaning, leading to a deep sense of insecurity and dissatisfaction vis-a-vis unfulfilled biographical plans (Vouyioukas & Liapi, 2013, p.89).

5.4 Summary

A common thread through all the interviews was the expression that employment/economic independence is the most important prerequisite for integration. Integration is mainly understood or equated with participation in the labor market. Previous research also suggests that there is a tendency to associate integration with employment. In the great Norwegian narrative - or dominant discourse - about integration, integration is defined primarily as paid work (Haaland, Magnussen & Wallevik, 2021). Several arguments are made to justify why employment/economic independence is the most important aspect of integration, reasons ranging from the measurable nature of employment to a concern for the welfare state. The stories of successful integration are stories of people who managed to get jobs while those who do not manage to find jobs are considered to be failures. The various definitions of integration that my informants gave in the previous chapter are replaced by a single narrative produced by the current nature of integration work. Get a job, get integrated!

6 Integration in relation to gender/gender equality

In the previous chapter, we have seen how employment/economic independence tends to be equated with integration. This chapter further explores integration from the perspective of integration workers by bringing in an important factor to the discussion which is gender. The chapter deals with two things: what understandings of gender the informants have and how that affects their understandings of integration. We have established in the first chapter that gender equality has a great importance in the Norwegian society but bringing out understandings of gender is important to be able to assess if gender equality is a central dimension of the understanding of integration.

6.1 The role of gender

This section deals with how the informants produce understandings of gender/gender equality both in the way they talk about themselves, about colleagues and about immigrants.

I asked Kari if she has had negative experiences because of her gender. She says the following:

Not openly but I have experienced participants who do not want to shake hands because their religion does not allow them to shake hands with a woman who is a stranger. I just deal with it. I start working with the person. We establish a relationship, and it is also my role to inform them about the consequences of such choices. If you choose not to shake hands with Norwegian women in the Norwegian society, it will influence how you will be perceived and what opportunities you get. For example, you might not get a job if you refuse to shake hands with a boss who is a woman at an interview. So, it is my role to inform them about that choice.

According to Kari, the negative thing that she has experienced because of her gender is some participants' refusal to shake hands and she deals with that by informing them about the possible consequences of such a choice. The consequences can be being perceived negatively or missing out on job opportunities. In the previous chapter, we saw how important employment and economic independence is for integration. So, what Kari is saying is that a person can lose an opportunity to be integrated through employment because of a refusal to shake hands. In this expression lies an expectation that conforming to the society's norms is essential for integration. In addition, Kari's response to the situation can be interpreted as a demonstration of power. Gullestad (2002) argues that handling such situations by using the argument of 'This is how we do it in Norway' is a demonstration of power which is counterproductive. What Kari is saying that the majority is in a position to grant or deny opportunities based on the immigrant's willingness to conform to its norms which demonstrates that it is the majority who holds and exercises power. Power can simply be considered the ability to move people, or to hold them firmly to prevent them from moving (Engelstad, 2010, p.15). In this case, Kari

describes the power the majority holds to move people towards the desired action/way of being by withholding opportunities.

Siri says the following when asked whether her gender influences her work with integration:

Yes, absolutely. It does and I think in a big way in fact. Women dare to talk about things more easily if I am alone with them. It can be because I am a woman. Of course, I cannot be sure, but it is my guess. There are many who wish to have a woman advisor, physiotherapist, doctor, gynecologist. There are many who want that because they think that we have a connection in some way because we are women or because they are used to talking to other women about difficult things. When it comes to men, I have had quite many challenges with men who are used to being the bread winners, fathers who even supported other relatives, men who had high positions regardless of what they did for a living just because they are men and are the oldest in the family. So, I have often had a lot of discussions, a lot of bargaining. Sometimes, I think it is because I am a woman, often much younger than some of the men who come here. Not all are used to listening to a woman in that way.

We see in the statement above that Siri does not have any doubt that her work is influenced by gender. She believes that women feel more comfortable to confide in her while her work with men can result in conflicts because the men are not used to bargaining with a younger woman. So, in this case, she is saying that her gender can both be an advantage and a disadvantage based on who she is working with. There lies an understanding that women and men are fundamentally different and with different needs. She expresses that, women wish to be helped by other women because they connect based on their gender, they understand one another's challenges. She claims that this is the case in other professions as well, not only in integration work. According to her, her work with men, and especially with older men, poses challenges and it requires extra effort on her part. Gender and age are interrelated here. According to Siri, these men are used to having a position of power in their countries just because of their gender and being the oldest in the family, but in the Norwegian society, where women can also have a position of power, it is hard for them to listen to a woman and take instructions. So, she must bargain to make them accept their new reality. Immigrants are portrayed in her statement as a homogenous group with a similar way of thinking even though the participants in the introduction program come from different countries and have different backgrounds. She refers to what 'they' are used to and how 'they' act even though 'they' are different people from different countries with different experiences and belief systems. In addition, individuals are considered as representatives of the societies they come from, and the behavior of certain individuals is considered as representative of their culture.

The women are seen in Siri's statement as needing help and counsel, while the men are depicted as people struggling to accept gender equality. The fact that Siri says that women confide in her when she is alone with them also implies that the women are afraid of their men or reluctant to open up about their problems in front of them. This paints the men as aggressors and as authoritative persons who do not provide a safe space for the women to talk openly about their challenges. Siri admits that these are her assumptions. Haaland, Magnussen & Wallevik (2021) argue that street-level bureaucrats' and volunteers' understanding of the challenges of men with a refugee background is

formed by the great Norwegian story of what integration is, by dominant integration discourses and by generalizing categories. In addition, they illustrate that the times street-level bureaucrats talk about their challenges with refugee men, it is often about the men's challenges with equality which they refer to as an equality shock. Furthermore, the complex challenges of refugee men are understood by simplified understandings. Siri's statement shows that her understanding of the challenges immigrant men face, is based on generalizations and simplified interpretations. She later explains what she must do to solve such issues:

So, I feel like I must work quite a lot with them honestly when it comes to men especially. I must work to establish a relationship where we are on the same page to an extent but at the same time, we cannot avoid the fact that it is me who is in a position of power because I give the information, I know the Norwegian society, I call the meetings, I have the meeting agenda even though I am open for questions. So, my position can be difficult for some especially because I am a woman.

Siri elaborates that she must establish a relationship with the men first to be able to do her work because according to her, it is difficult for the men to accept that a woman is in a position of power. This requires more time and work on her part. She believes that it is difficult for the men to accept that a woman knows more and is in charge. The interaction is heavily influenced by her perceptions about immigrant men and their challenges. She strengthens her argument by saying that the reason for the challenging interaction between her and the men in the program is their inability to accept a woman's power over them. The men are depicted as a challenging group to work with, with difficult attitudes and behavior. There is also no doubt that Siri recognizes that she is in a position of power. She expresses that it is not something that cannot be avoided which implies that it is something the men in the program wish to avoid.

Marta shares the same sentiment regarding her interaction with the participants of the program who are men. She thinks that it is challenging to work with them because of their existing ideas of what a woman's position should be:

For some men, it can be challenging to have a woman advisor if they come from a society where men have leadership roles over women in their families and had been a person of authority. So, the men can think it is difficult especially men who are older, but it has become better the older I get than it was 8, 10 years ago. It was difficult if a 45, 50-year-old man did not get his entire salary because of something or if I had to turn down a request or give a negative message. So, it can be extra difficult for some that it is a woman saying it. I experience that sometimes and they do not always have the respect for me that I expect regarding how they speak or use facial expressions and body language.

This informant also believes that being a younger woman is a disadvantage when it comes to working with older men. The relation between gender and age also appears here in her expression. The fact that she is getting older seems to have improved her interactions to an extent but not entirely. She also admits that she in turn treats such men differently and that affects the work. She assumes that the reason for their behavior is their previous position in the families. The assumption is that they are not used to taking orders from women or interacting with women who have authority.

It influences the chemistry a little. The cooperation becomes a bit poorer. There is not a very good tone, and it becomes very professional. You do the work you have to do anyways but you can have a poorer impression of that person than others and when there is an internship and maybe five candidates, the person might not be chosen because of that kind of behavior but we do talk about it with them and say that the way you are sitting is not ok and the way you raise your voice or roll your eyes and use gestures is not an acceptable way of communication in the relationship we have. So, whether it is this kind of thing or shaking hands, to some extent, it does affect the work.

It seems like even though she does not encounter direct verbal opposition because of her gender, she believes that the gestures she sees from the men are specifically because of her gender. She also mentions that such men might lose opportunities to participate in internships because of their behavior. The municipality uses internships to get the participants employed. Missing out on such opportunities is therefore missing out on job opportunities that are considered vital for integration. As mentioned in the first chapter, according to Lipsky (1980) street-level bureaucrats can affect the life chances of those they work with. This is a good demonstration of that as Marta responds to the perceived opposition to her gender by depriving the men of opportunities they might otherwise have. None of the integration workers have gotten direct verbal opposition to their gender but they interpret gestures, facial expressions and body language based on their existing assumptions of what immigrant men are like.

Noor is also prone to that way of thinking. She says the following:

I have not gotten a direct reaction, but you can see... you notice that that it can be difficult for some men to accept that a woman is standing in front of them telling them how things are, telling them what to do.

Kristine adds another perspective to the challenges of integration workers by explaining that her presence makes some men uncomfortable. She can even be at the receiving end of inappropriate remarks because she is a woman. She says the following about how her gender impacts her work:

I have felt uncomfortable about some about that. I have felt uncomfortable being in the meeting room because the man is not used to being alone in a room with a woman and almost starts sending me flirtatious looks. I try to pretend as if nothing is happening. There was one time I was really provoked by one person. My participant came with a friend who was supposed to interpret for him, and the friend said something about how my participant was lucky to have such a beautiful woman as an advisor. I have also had a participant who provoked me by saying that I look like Jennifer Anniston. He was hoping that he would achieve something by flattering me.

In the statement above, Kristine provides three examples of instances where immigrant men behaved inappropriately with her which makes her line of work seem unsafe and challenging. What she says can be considered as sexual harassment that she faces at work because of her gender. Her way of resolving such issues, she says, like the rest of my informants, is to have conversations with the men and to inform them that it is not a proper way of behaviour in a professional setting. Immigrant women are depicted in the

interviews as victims that integration workers need to help and enlighten while the men are portrayed as oppressive and in some cases as sexual harassers. Some of my informants who are women consider themselves as almost victims of these men who come from 'cultures' where they are used to having positions of power. It is unclear whether these types of interactions are common or whether these are isolated incidents. However, these are the types of examples that integration workers provided in our conversations with immigrant men.

Interestingly, the informants who are men do not express that they face such issues. On the contrary, they believe that their gender is an advantage.

Ola says that he gets more respect than others because of his age and his gender:

It has to do with age and gender. A lot of people show more respect to me because I am as old as I am. Many participants say that. In Norway, it is not right that they have more respect for me and differentiate between me and one who is much younger. It is wrong. Regarding gender, there has not been anything special. There can be some women who do not want to shake hands with a man, but it is not a problem. I should just respect the person's wishes. It does not need to be an obstacle for integration. We can talk about it, but we cannot demand that they shake hands.

Ola expresses that older age in combination with being a man can be an advantage in his profession. He admits that he has that advantage and gets more respect even though he believes that he should not be treated differently based on those characteristics. He explains that in Norway, one should not be treated differently because of age implying that in other places, one might get special/better treatment as one gets older. He does say that there are some women who do not shake hands with him because of religion. He has no complaints about that and does not believe it is an obstacle for integration unlike my other informants. Ola does not inform them about the 'consequences' of such choices or exercise power by threatening to deny them of opportunities. He expresses that he can talk about it but does not demand anything. By saying that he has not experienced anything special because of his gender, he demonstrates that some women's unwillingness to shake hands is not something he considers a problematic gender-related issue.

He explains however, that his female colleagues face challenges:

They have said that they get less respect. One of my colleagues speaks about it clearly. They give her the impression that they know best and do not need her advice and what she has to say. At the same time, we can say that (gender) equality is a challenge for some, but it is a process all must go through because like I said, in Norway, the goal is (gender) equality. So, if you are a newcomer to Norway, you must learn that.

In giving the example of his female colleague, Ola is expressing that the interaction between integration workers and participants of the introduction program is influenced by gender, but it is usually the women who express challenges with immigrant men. He says that participants of the program do not value her advice in the same way and do not respect her as much. Ola says first that gender equality is a challenge for some which implies that it is not everyone who has issues with it but later, he contradicts himself by saying that it is a process all must go through. This implies that gender equality is a Norwegian value that all immigrants need to learn, a value they did not have before to

Norway. As his closing statement illustrates, when it comes to gender equality, there is no negotiation. "If you are a newcomer to Norway, you must learn that." In short, 'they' do not have gender equality. 'We' have it. So, 'they' need to learn that from 'us'.

Bjørn has a similar experience to that of Ola:

Most of the people in the program are men. I have experienced that the young men look at me as a father figure. Sometimes, people also have ideas about the different roles of men and women. I see that the men listen to me because I am an older man. So, my gender and age can be advantages. It is not a problem for me to work with women who are in the program, but some have a religious belief that they should not have any contact with other men besides their husbands. I remember one day having an appointment with a couple. I came and sat on the chair next to the woman, but she got up and exchanged seats with her husband to be away from me. I thought it was awkward, but I do not take it personally. There are also some who do not want to shake my hand. But it is also fun to work with women because they ask about a lot of things like about family and children. I, myself, have kids. So, I feel like I can give advice.

Bjørn also admits that his age and gender are an advantage confirming the relation between those two factors. He has not had negative experiences with men and even though some women might prefer to keep their distance physically, it is not something that affects his work. In fact, he feels like he can give good advice to them because he has experience with family life and raising children. Like Ola, he does not believe that such choices need to have consequences. In the incident that he talks about, a woman did not want to sit near him but that only caused a passing feeling of awkwardness, and her action is not something he takes personally. Bjørn does not seem to dwell on such issues. In fact, he shares advice with them about family. He mentions that the things that women ask him about are about family and children implying that the men discuss such topics to a lesser extent.

As illustrated above, integration workers believe that gender plays a role in integration work. They stress gender as something that affects their work. By that, they are constantly producing understandings of gender. The understanding of gender that stands out in their descriptions is that men and women are fundamentally different, with different attributes, different wants and needs. According to my informants, men and women also behave differently. They are interested in different things. That in turn means that they need different treatment.

Siri explains that even though she tries not to differentiate between people based on their gender, she sometimes treats people differently so that they can get equal treatment. That means that equity is important to her:

By that I mean, I have seen different kinds of people and types of families through the years in my work, things that happen regarding violence and how people should talk to one another. There are many different things that I have observed and been told. Therefore, it is sometimes important to treat people differently because people need different kinds of follow-up procedures based on what kind of situation they are in and especially when it comes to women who are vulnerable and maybe have been oppressed for many years. So, one needs to talk to them in a different way, have some extra follow-ups for them. Sometimes, I have to talk to them separately even though I am responsible for the whole family

to find out a bit more. So, it is a different treatment for that reason, which is based on gender because very often, it is the women who experience difficult things. Of course, men can also experience difficult situations but in my experience, they do not dare as much to say something about it.

The idea that is expressed here is that women's experiences are different from that of men. So, they need a different type of treatment. Immigrant women are again portrayed here as victims of violence and oppression. They are portrayed as more vulnerable than men. Siri also implies that these women may be afraid of their husbands but are more willing to talk about their experiences and problems if their significant others are not in the room. So, she tries to talk to them separately. She explains that the women might need more follow-up procedures based on the situation they are in. She mentions that men can also experience difficult things but might not talk about it. Although she does not mention what the challenges of immigrant men might be, it is implied that it is not oppression and vulnerability. Those are attributes she associates with immigrant women. She also mentions that "very often, it is the women who experience difficult things". The challenges that immigrant men might have, are mentioned in passing in contrast to the women who need great care and assistance.

Kristine explains that there is a possibility that the women can get pregnant during the program and that can affect the outcome of the program. She says that she gives women tips about contraceptives and encourages them to pursue education. She admits that she tries to uplift the women a little more. That illustrates that integration workers can also try to influence immigrant women's reproductive choices to make immigrant women pursue education and employment which are things that tend to be associated with integrating into the Norwegian society like demonstrated in the previous chapter. Integration is often equated with paid work and paid work for women is associated with gender equality. So, Kristine's efforts to uplift the women more and to push them to pursue education can both be linked to an effort to help them integrate and to achieve gender equality.

Marta says that she has had more success with men because women have more responsibilities at home:

If they have a lot of care duties and you see that more often with women than men or if they are single mothers with many children, it can make the work more difficult because then, there is a lot of absence and another focus.

In the above quotation, my informant highlights that it can be a challenge for the women in the program to have focus on the program because they have a lot of responsibilities at home. This idea is also repeated by Bjørn and Noor. The challenge of single mothers is mentioned as they have a lot of care duties at home and absence from the program, but the married women are also portrayed as women who have the sole responsibility for housework and the raising of children. That in turn gives us a picture of immigrant men who do not support their wives who participate in the program to pursue education or career. The women in turn, are portrayed as having too much responsibility at home as well as being oppressed by the men in their lives.

Noor says:

It is mostly men who succeed in the program because they do not have responsibilities at home. They do not have responsibility for children because they feel like it is a woman's job. There are a lot of cultures that see the man as the provider. He should go outside and work while the woman does the chores and has responsibility for the children. It could be that. Maybe there is more pressure on the men to find jobs.

Noor mentions that it is more men succeed in the program. Bjørn has mentioned earlier that men are overrepresented in the program. It is unclear whether that is the reason for more men succeeding in the program or whether statistically seen, men do succeed more than women. Again, we see that negative behaviour in immigrant men is attributed to their culture and what they are used to practicing in their countries.

6.2 Integration as a quest to achieve gender equality in immigrant men and women

I asked my informants what an integrated man is like and then what an integrated woman is like. The aim of this question is to let my informants further expand on their understanding of integration in relation to gender.

Ola defines a well-integrated man in the following manner:

In family life, if integration also means incorporating Norwegian culture and tradition, it means that the man does the same work as the woman because that is part of Norwegian culture or at least we aim for that. So, that applies for a man who is going to be part of the Norwegian society. The man should do the same work as the woman at home. Maybe I am an idealist but there should not be a difference there because the goal of the Norwegian society is for men and women to be equal also in raising children.

In the context of family life, integration for Ola is incorporating Norwegian culture and tradition but, what he is describing is imitating the Norwegian society. If a man is to be part of the society, he needs to lead family life just like Norwegians do. Ola refers to gender equality here as Norwegian 'culture'. This assumes that men from other 'cultures' do not have this value. Therefore, they need to learn and implement it to be integrated. Because my informants did not get to read the questions before the interviews, there are some paradoxes. Their spontaneous explanations are sometimes followed by opposing ideas. Ola later mentions that gender equality varies in Norwegian homes, too, and not being able to do 'a woman's work' at home does not necessarily mean that one is not integrated even though his initial expectation from immigrants was achieving that goal of sameness. By calling certain chores 'a woman's work', he is also implying that these are women's responsibilities. Even in the above quotation, he admits that his expectation is based on what the Norwegian society aims for and not how things are like. In his initial definition, Ola gave an ideal definition of integration based on adaptation and culture preservation, but when it comes to the question of gender and what an integrated man should look like, he presents his expectation that immigrant men should imitate the type of gender equality that the Norwegian society aims for.

It is also important to note that the men and women who participate in the introduction program have only lived in Norway for a short time, but the expectation is that they should be able to implement the ideal form of gender equality that is aspired to in

Norway. This means that in relation to gender equality and gender relations, the expectation is that newcomers should assimilate to be integrated.

When I asked him to define a well-integrated woman, he answers that it would be wrong to differentiate between a woman and a man indicating that sameness should be the basis for the outlook on gender equality. In other words, an integrated woman to him is one who also imitates the type of gender equality that exists in Norway. This assumes that immigrant women are not equal with their male counterparts and need to correct that first to be integrated.

Kristine gives a similar answer:

An integrated man is one who manages to find his way in the society, finds things, has a job, treats both men and women with respect regardless of gender. The equality part is important. It must be one who understands that.

She defines a well-integrated woman by saying the following:

They should have an understanding that when they have kids, things should be equal too, but I know that it is not that way with Norwegians either. For example, with maternity leave and such and that one can work even if one has children and that both should participate in housework. Responsibility at home and economic responsibility is something they both have.

The above expectation that newcomers should follow the double earner/double carer family model comes with an admission that things are not like that in every Norwegian home. Regardless, she stresses that the equality part is important if one is to be considered integrated. Integrated men and women work outside the home and participate equally in housework and in raising children. When talking about integrated women, she stresses equal responsibility for raising children implying that they should not have sole/more responsibility for raising children. The insistence on gender equality as a prerequisite for integration is prevalent in the answer. Like Ola, she expresses that she does not know whether it's like that with Norwegians either, but the expectation is that immigrants need to have gender equality to be integrated.

Marta explains that an integrated man is one who has the following qualities:

If you are a man who is not born here, in order to be integrated, you need to adapt to the values of gender equality that we have worked so hard for. That means equal rights for both genders and equal opportunities of fair sharing of tasks in a relationship or in a family setting, that one does not need to exercise extreme control which also relates to (gender) equality. One must learn the codes and unwritten rules about how one acts towards the opposite gender in Norway. I think that this is also important to be very integrated. If one is integrated but does not understand accepted and normal behavior and conduct, one is not really integrated after all.

The way Marta begins her statement is good summarization of what all my informants believe to be true about integration. Those who are not born here need to adapt to 'our' values. Her expectations come with assumptions. The expectation is that a well-integrated man should adapt to gender equality, and the assumption is that immigrant men exercise extreme control and possibly have a conduct that is not normal and acceptable in the Norwegian society especially towards the opposite gender. She makes a

reference to the history of the struggle for gender equality in Norway and insists that adapting to those values is something an immigrant man should do to be integrated into the society. She says 'we' have worked hard for those values which implies that 'they' need to learn those values from 'us' if are to be a part of 'us'. It is important to note that my informants implicitly or explicitly categorize 'Norwegians' and immigrants into different groups, groups that have different attributes, different norms, the first being better than the latter.

Because she mentions that there is acceptable behavior and conduct, I asked her what she would define as unacceptable behavior:

It can be both looks and comments on the street that are not accepted but if one thinks it is ok and comments when people walk by, gaze, it is like... sexism or objectifying woman who pass by or women that you know, then I feel like you are not really integrated. That is not an acceptable way of being in Norway.

My informant explains that in her eyes, objectifying women is not an acceptable way of being in Norway but that suggests the implication that it might be an acceptable way being somewhere else. Such assumptions come up in conversations about immigrant men and integration because of a stereotypical picture of immigrant men. Eriksen (2002) argues that stereotypes are crucial in defining the boundaries of one's own group. They inform the individual of the virtues of his or her own group and the vices of the others, and they thereby serve to justify thinking that 'I am an X and not a Y'. The stereotype of immigrant men as aggressive and problematic was a redundant theme in the interviews. They are also portrayed as men who do not know how to behave towards the opposite sex, as sexual harassers, as people lacking in proper conduct and behavior. By saying that such behavior is not acceptable in Norway, Marta is saying that 'we' do not act like that, learn from 'us' and be integrated.

Concerning integrated women, Marta says that they should be able to interact with the opposite gender in a friendly manner, shake hands, have eye contact, participate in the community. She also mentions that a woman should be independent and understand societal codes, ways of being and conduct. She adds that independence and interaction with the opposite gender applies to both to men and women. In contrast to immigrant men, Marta portrays immigrant women as timid and shy by implying that it might be difficult/forbidden for them to shake hands, have eye contact or interact with the opposite sex. It is assumed that the women are subordinate to the men. Even though she explains that interaction and independence are expected from both men and women, the way she portrays immigrant men and women is completely different.

6.3 Summary

The interviews illustrate that the understanding of integration that my informants have is gendered. Gender equality is a central dimension of the understanding of integration. In other words, gender equality is a benchmark for integration. The interactions of integration workers with the participants of the introduction program are heavily influenced by pre-existing perceptions of what the participants' needs, norms and values are. They then interpret the actions/gestures of the people they meet within the context of their understanding.

The most important understanding of gender in the data that is relevant for the thesis is that women and men are fundamentally different. Another understanding is that (immigrant) women are subordinate or have a lower status than men. A third understanding is that gender relates to culture (religion), but also to age. Gender is also important for power.

Gender equality becomes a central element because 'they' are perceived as subject to the patriarchy and 'we' have gender equality. For that reason, imitating the Norwegian form of gender equality is a must in order to be integrated. When it comes to gender equality, the message is clear. Immigrants are expected to duplicate the Norwegian model of gender equality to be integrated. Not only are they encouraged to postpone their plans of expanding their families and imitate the double carer/double earner model, matters like shaking hands with the opposite sex are considered as actions that can hinder their integration. The insistence on assimilation is undeniable. Nevertheless, the process is referred to as integration. Olwig & Pærregaard (2011) argue that according to research, introductory programs must be viewed as part of a larger effort to render refugees similar to the local population, because such similarity is regarded as a precondition for their being treated on an equal basis. In interviews with integration workers about and gender/gender equality, this was evident as being the same in that area is not just desired but is a must for successful integration.

7 Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I will draw conclusions about how integration workers give meaning to the term integration and the politics that is attached to the term. Here I want to summarize and discuss the findings from the analysis chapters. What does integration mean to integration workers? What understandings of the term lie in the way integration workers conduct their work and what understandings are produced in relation to gender? In order to shed light on these questions, it becomes necessary to say something about common features in the material. How can these findings be understood in the light of a larger societal context? In the analysis, I have also examined which understandings of immigrants are represented in narrations of gender equality and integration, and I will therefore say something about how the view of immigrants leads to an approach which is different from integration.

At the end of the chapter, I will reflect on what the different understandings of integration can tell us in an overall perspective. Integration has been used as the preferred approach in Norway and other European countries to let immigrants adapt to the host society as well as preserve their own cultures. Nevertheless, although there exist many understandings, in practice, integration is mostly equated with paid work. Regarding gender equality, the approach can be described as assimilationist as it requires immigrants to imitate the exact form of gender equality that exists in Norway.

7.1 Definitions of integration that lean towards social integration

In the initial descriptions from integration workers, the definitions of integration are many. Integration is understood as a mutual process, as participation and acquisition of knowledge, as adaptation to new culture and preservation of one's own culture and as a multifaceted term encompassing many diverse aspects. There is not a common definition that unites all confirming the ambiguity and vagueness of the term. Many researchers have pointed that out earlier, but what was perhaps interesting is that most definitions given by integration workers were focused on social integration. Here I have used the distinctions made by Mikkelsen (2008) between social integration and system integration. Integration workers facilitate the introduction program which has incorporating immigrants into the work force as one of its main goals. In other words, one of their main responsibilities is facilitating system integration. Their personal understanding of the term is sometimes in conflict with the understanding of integration produced by the way they conduct their work which is something some of them reflect on. Social integration is referred to as 'everyday integration' in political documents and is somewhat presented in a way that is less important than system integration but to integration workers, that type of integration through social arenas is what they associate most with the term.

7.2 Integration equated with work and economic independence

In my attempt to further explore the understanding of integration workers of the term integration, I tried to find out which understandings are produced by the way integration

workers conduct their work. Here, the emphasis on the importance of employment/economic independence was clear. This was something that all my informants insisted on and agreed on. Their initial descriptions of the term were replaced by an insistence on this one aspect. Their reasons for insisting on this aspect is the measurability of employment in order to show results for the work being conducted as the office registers this as 'goal achievement'. The participants of the program as well as integration workers are evaluated on that ground. Even though this sometimes does conflict with how they want to do their work, they all explain that employment/economic independence is what is important at their workplace. Another reason for their emphasis on employment/economic independence is a concern for the sustainability of the welfare state as they mention that for Norway, it is work that is most important. But it is not possible to say that integration workers only conduct their work in that manner because it is what their work requires them to do. In their examples of people who were able to successfully integrate into the Norwegian society, they give examples of people who either were able to find jobs quickly or people who they were confident would get jobs. This leads me to conclude that, their work has produced in them an understanding of integration that equates it with employment/economic independence.

7.3 Integration as implementing the Norwegian form of gender equality

It was necessary to explore what integration means to integration workers in relation to gender/gender equality as gender equality is a highly regarded value in Norway. It is so highly regarded that when it is the theme, the sentiments are that immigrants need to imitate the Norwegian form of gender equality in order to be integrated.

This also stems from existing understandings of the practices of immigrant men and women in relation to gender equality. The implicit message is that immigrant men and women lack gender equality as they come from 'cultures' where men oppress women. The men are also depicted in a manner that makes them look aggressive and as sexual harassers. Some integration workers painted this generalizing picture by almost seeming like victims of such men in their interactions with them. The point was that a person who is integrated does not behave that way. This gives a hierarchical placing of cultures where the Norwegian culture is presented as more civilized than that of immigrants. This essentialist understanding leads to an attempt to demand that immigrants need to learn gender equality in order to be integrated and have equal responsibilities both inside and outside the home. The latter comes with an admission that things are not that way in all Norwegian homes but that is what the society aspires for and that is what the demand is from newcomers.

7.4 Common features and conclusion

The analysis shows that integration means different things to integration workers based on the topic being discussed, but also points to some persistent commonalities in the meaning of the term. Integration workers initially define the term in various ways almost all leaning to social integration. Through their expressions that integration through various arenas is vital, they convey their belief that social integration is important.

The understanding produced by the nature of their work is that employment/economic independence equals integration. That is what they aspire to achieve in their work with participants of the introduction program. There are various reasons provided to explain why employment/economic independence is the goal even though other aspects of

integration are overlooked. Integration workers, while conducting their work, almost put aside their own personal understanding of the term integration and replace it with an understanding that equates integration with paid work.

Regarding gender, there is a resounding agreement that demands that immigrants need to implement gender equality like it is done in Norway. In conversations about gender, integration workers categorize themselves in the group 'Norwegian' and express how members of the other group, 'immigrants' behave. They also imply that (immigrant) men and women are fundamentally different and need different treatment. This categorization leads to stereotyping and generalizations that assist in producing rhetoric that minoritizes participants of the introduction program. These beliefs lead to an effort to teach immigrants the principle of gender equality. Those who are regarded as integrated are those who imitate the Norwegian form of gender equality. That makes it difficult to say that it is integration that is demanded. If the majority demands common norms and values, then it becomes almost assimilation. 'The Norwegian' seems to be the reference point, a higher norm which immigrants must live up to.

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Letter of information

Do you want to be interviewed for a master thesis about integration workers' understanding of the term integration'?

The master thesis is about how people who work with integration understand the term. It will explore how integration workers apply their understanding in their work. In addition, it will try to find out if gender plays any role in how integration workers conduct their work and whether it has any influence.

To complete this work, I need to interview integration workers who work at the training centre for refugees in your municipality. Would you be willing to participate? The questions will be about your own understandings, opinions, and experiences.

What does it mean for you to be interviewed?

- All your personal information and material you provide will be confidential and you will be anonymous. I will follow strict guidelines so that the information cannot be traced back to you.
- It is voluntary.
- The interview will take 30 minutes- 1 hour and there will only be the interviewee(you) and the interviewer(I) present.
- A voice recorder will be used during the interview.

If you choose to be interviewed, you get to decide where and when you want the interview to take place.

The master thesis will be written by me, Meron Afeworki Gebreyohannes. I am a master student at NTNU at the institute for interdisciplinary cultural studies. My supervisors are Berit Gullikstad and Guro Korsnes Kristensen.

If you need more information about the master thesis before you make your decision, you can contact me by this number: *****13.

The following form of consent will be signed when we meet for the interview:

Form of consent

All who choose to take part in the master thesis give a written consent before participation. The consent can be withdrawn at any time without any reason. In that case, the information will be deleted. I want to emphasize that I have an obligation to keep the information confidential. Both the organization and every individual who takes part will be anonymous when the results are published in the form of a master thesis. Then all the materials voice records will be deleted.

The Project is reported to Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste A/S.

Consent:

I have received information about the master thesis about integration workers' understanding of the term integration and I am willing to participate in the interview:

Date:

Signature:

Interview guide

- Is there something you would like to say or ask before we start?
- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Professional background
- How long have you worked with integration of refugees?

Your understanding of the term 'integration.'

- What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word, 'integration'?
- What are the requirements a person needs to fulfill in order to be integrated into the Norwegian society?
- What are the main steps you encourage the participants of the introduction program to take in order to help them be integrated?
- Can you give concrete examples of instances when a person was able to be integrated? What measures did that person take?
- Can you give concrete examples of instances when a person failed to be integrated into the society? What do you think were the reasons for that failure?

Gender as a factor

- How would you define a well-integrated man? What qualities does that man possess?
- How would you define a well-integrated woman? What qualities does that woman possess?
- Do you believe that gender plays any role on how you work with integration?
- Do you personally believe that it is easier to work with men or women? Or is it all the same?
- In your experience, have you had more success in your work with one gender than the other? What do you think is the reason for that?

Conclusion

- Is there anything you think we should have talked about that was not mentioned in this interview?
- Is there anything you would like to say before we conclude the interview?

